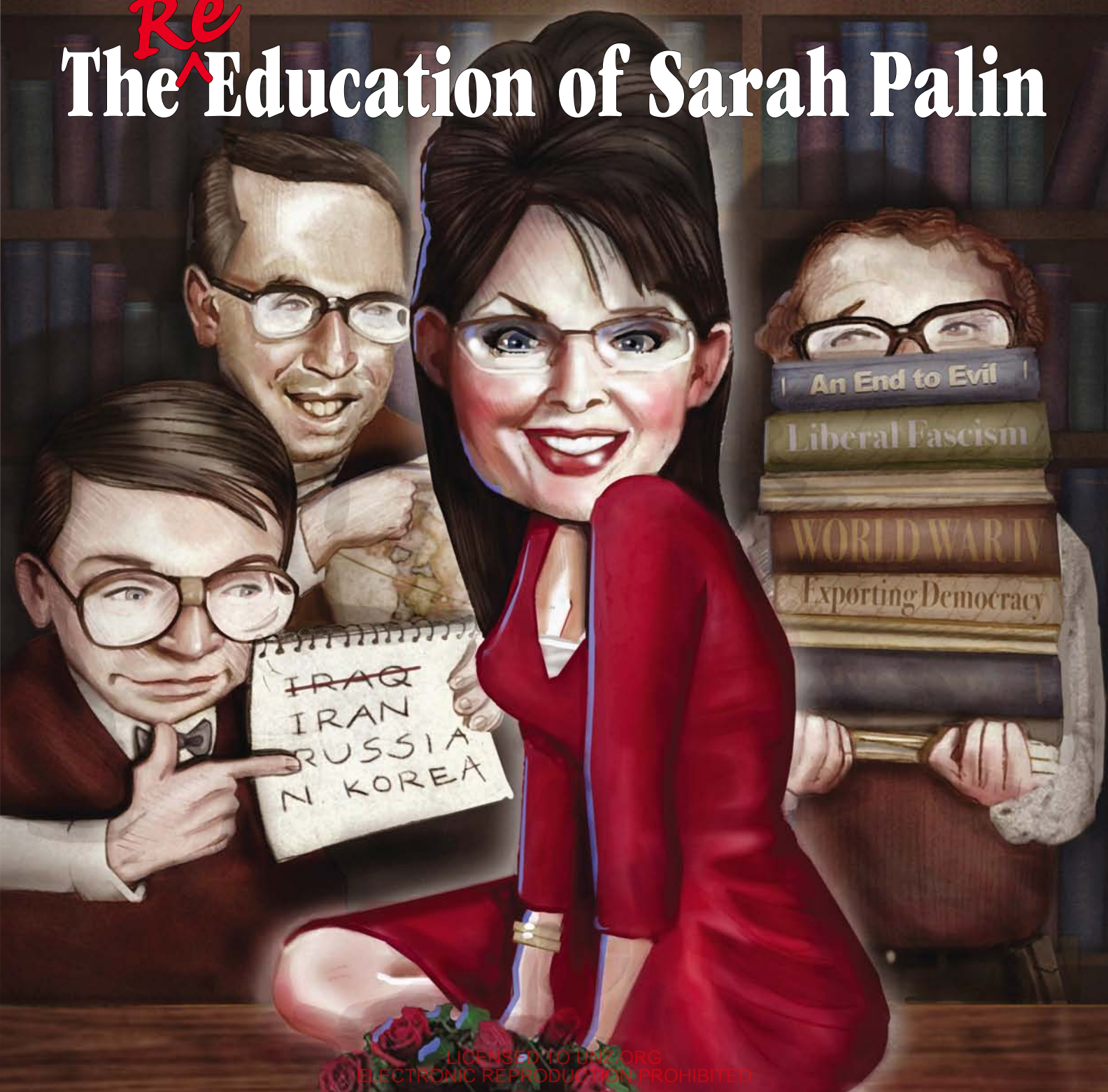


BAILOUT NATION ■ MCCAIN'S FOREIGN COUNSEL ■ LIGHTS, CAMERA, WAR

OCTOBER 6, 2008

# The American Conservative

## *Re* The Education of Sarah Palin



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## CONNERLY FIRES BACK

I have become accustomed to ad hominem attacks from the Left. But Michael Brendan Dougherty's article ("Connerly Cashes In," Sept. 22) fails every standard of fairness that we assume exists in journalism. The author called me and claimed to be writing a column about our initiatives and the status of signature-collection firms. He gained access under a false pretext. His column is replete with inaccuracies and is one of the worst hatchet jobs I have ever seen leveled against me. For example, anyone who believes that Al Sharpton does what he does for \$4,000 annually is a fool. We did not start "Super Tuesday for Equal Rights" with ten states; it was five, and four of those are still in play.

We spent, perhaps, five minutes out of maybe an hour and a half of interview time discussing my income, and he downplayed the significance of this issue. Had I known that this was his focus, more time could have been devoted to giving him the facts. My firm, Connerly & Associates, has never been a registered "minority contractor" or benefited from sole-source minority contracting preference programs. We were not idle during the years that he claims nothing was being done. ACRI/ACRC has more than two staff members. Our opponents will not agree that nothing of significance has occurred as a result of our efforts. My personal income was greater before I got involved in this issue than it is now. So this issue is not my vehicle for personal wealth accumulation. Finally, I do what I do because of my beliefs, not as a tool of the Right.

WARD CONNERLY  
Sacramento, Calif.

### Michael B. Dougherty replies:

While Mr. Connerly and I did discuss his ballot initiatives, we talked about his compensation at length—about 25 minutes of a 40-minute conversation. I did not misrepresent myself, and I acknowledged the sincerity of Mr. Connerly's beliefs in my piece.

The figure for Al Sharpton's salary comes from National Action Network's tax forms, listed in the same manner as Mr. Connerly's salary of \$300,000 on ACRI's tax forms. What Sharpton earns as a preacher or media figure is not relevant when discussing nonprofit compensation.

As of this writing, Mr. Connerly's organization's website, SuperTuesday2008.org, states that "ten states are being considered" in his campaign, not the five he claims. Only two ballot initiatives are sure to be on the ballot for November. The other two that Mr. Connerly describes as "in play" are unlikely to clear legal challenges.

Mr. Connerly says that his personal income was greater before he took on nonprofit work. Strictly speaking, this may be correct. But has Connerly & Associates, which is still run by Mr. Connerly's wife and employs another Connerly relative, lost business while Mr. Connerly has been doing nonprofit work? I considered his household income beyond the scope of this piece.

Regarding the status of Connerly & Associates, in a 1995 *San Francisco Chronicle* article, Suzanna Espinso Solis reported that Mr. Connerly's company "received more than \$1 million in state business during the past six years by signing up as a minority contractor." She wrote, "Connerly... acknowledged that his firm participated in the 'repugnant' race-based program, but he denied that it was affirmative action." Instead, he described the program as a "policy that requires that every contract ... include participation of at least 15 percent of minority businesses and 5 percent of women." If there was nothing wrong with this, why does Mr. Connerly call it "repugnant"?

I stand by the reporting in the piece. If I have any regret, it's that I didn't give more credit to the work done by Connerly and others to overturn Michigan's affirmative-action policies. That was a particularly difficult battle—and an important one.

## LOSING THE NEW COLD WAR

I share Ted Galen Carpenter's view ("What Russia Wants," Sept. 22) that Kagan, Kristol, Albright, and Brzezinski are wrongheaded. I also agree that Russia presents no threat to the U.S. or Europe in the near future.

But I do believe that there are serious issues of contention emerging. It would be a mistake to interpret the Medvedev's doctrine of *blizhnee zarubyezhye* as simply Russia being content to exert its strategic influence over the republics of the former Soviet Union. Russia has always seen itself as a world player and will use its strategic assets to assert itself globally.

Unlike the Soviet Union, Russia does not wish to achieve its aims militarily or by regional political subversion. The prevailing themes of Russian foreign policy will be, for the foreseeable future, classical, pre-WWII Soviet themes of security and stability.

This is where the "near abroad" category comes to play. Other than having large ethnic Russian minorities, the former republics have strategically important links to Russia's economy. It would be political suicide for Medvedev and Putin to allow the U.S. to squeeze Russia out of these regions. The Caspian oil and gas reserves in Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan are vital to Russian prosperity and modernity.

Russia will resist any American action that threatens its economic interests or nuclear deterrent. It will not attack the U.S. militarily—there are no Saakashvilis in the Kremlin. But it does not have to: the derelict U.S. economy has been doing an excellent job of degrading the hapless giant's capacity to project its wishful thinking militarily.

JIRI SEVERA  
Ottawa, Ontario

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COVER ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS HIERS

[ECONOMY]

## OUT ON BAIL

As we go to press, Congress is poised to give Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson 5 percent of our GDP to make the worst possible investment. He wants taxpayers to take out Wall Street's trash—and pay \$700 billion for the privilege. Though the analysts who proved most prescient believe we're still a long way from the bottom, Paulson plans to buy up toxic assets at "fair market prices"—which is to say more than market prices since holders wouldn't otherwise sell. His bonus for brokering the raw deal? Powers any dictator would covet: "Decisions by the Secretary ... are non-reviewable and committed to agency discretion, and may not be reviewed by any court of law or any administrative agency."

Conservatives denounce socialized medicine, but can't stave off socialized banking. Swift as Fannie and Freddie became wards of the state and AIG put us all in the insurance business, the U.S. government is assuming sole liability for banks' rotten paper. Worse, unlike the 1989 savings and loan crisis in which the feds sold off insured loans from busted thrifts, today, as the *Washington Post's* Sebastian Mallaby points out, "In buying bad loans before banks fail, the Bush administration [is] signing up for a financial war of choice. It [will] spend billions of dollars on the theory that preemption will avert the mass destruction of banks."

Sound familiar? Last time Americans were sold on an imminent threat requiring unchecked executive authority, we got a bloody quagmire. Now the rush is on again. Congress is balking at the massive outlay, but Representative Average, from the 4th district of Wherever, is a little fuzzy on how derivatives work. So when the Fed chairman and Treasury secretary say that if he doesn't play along, it's economic Armageddon—



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don't forget that the election is just two months away—he'll give them what they want.

Bush is playing Paulson's parrot. McCain is too dazed to continue his campaign. Obama, per usual, calls for change. Ideologues on both sides are so hidebound as to be useless: after Paulson announced his plan, the *Wall Street Journal* featured Democrat Lanny Davis complaining, "It should be more than just a \$700 billion bailout. It should also include billions to help homeowners avoid foreclosure, to assist the auto industry, to upgrade the nation's infrastructure, and to spur development of alternative energy sources." Adjoining, a neocon clique pleaded, "Everyone Needs to Worry About Iran."

Everyone needs to worry, all right, not about a demagogue a world away but about what will happen when Paulson's gambit fails. Our debt will be out of sight, our credit rating shot, our currency cratered. Perhaps we'll be able to warm ourselves by burning all that paper Hank's buying.

[LEFT]

## RED INK

Our friends at *The Nation* have discovered a kind of socialism that they don't like, the kind that involves banks. Give the leading magazine of the Left points—it's right about bailouts that

nationalize risk while keeping profits private. William Greider calls this "Goldman Sachs Socialism," though it turns out he favors outright communism over Paulson's puny measures: "Washington should literally take control of the banking and finance sector and employ its emergency powers to oversee and direct these private, profit-making enterprises." So give Greider only half a point, if that.

James Henry, also writing for the venerable progressive weekly, has marginally more sober ideas in a piece titled "Socialism for Bankers, Savage Capitalism for Everyone Else?" Alas, he follows the otherwise perceptive Sebastian Mallaby's unwise suggestion that government—or, mythically, "the public"—should be compensated for the bailout with partial ownership of the rescued firms. "This will permit taxpayers to share in the upside of this restructuring," says Henry, "... the taxpayers as a whole will at least be able to receive some capital gains and perhaps some bank dividends for their trouble." Sounds reasonable—except that the government is not the taxpayers, who will never see a dime.

The Left does better when it sticks to criticizing Paulson's Wall Street care package, which truly is soft socialism for CEO's. Reforms of the kind Greider and Henry propose, drastic or mild, are best left to the likes of Fidel Castro.

[RIGHT]

## USUAL SUSPECTS

Who's to blame for the unfolding financial crisis? According to many conservatives, poor black people and, of course, Democrats.

*National Review Online* indicts President Carter's Community Reinvestment Act for the meltdown. The CRA emboldened community organizers—like you-know-who—to force banks to make loans to uncreditworthy minorities, you see. Terry Jones of *Investor's Business Daily* blames Clinton's "multicultural housing policy" and his mandates to increase home ownership among blacks and Hispanics.

But as economist Michael Barr points out, about half of subprime loans came from mortgage companies that were unaffected by CRA's mandates. Perhaps only a quarter of all subprime loans were made by banks governed by "multicultural housing" policies. Nothing excuses politically correct credit, but did community organizers really force lenders to infect all financial markets by repackaging their bad mortgages into securities? Did poor blacks invent credit default swaps?

Of course not. While these so-called conservatives criticize the misguided dogoodism of Democrats past, they ignore the present Republican administration that is pioneering socialism for the rich.

Bush proposed an "ownership society," saying that Americans would prosper when they were given more economic freedom and accountability. Now the same administration insists that prosperity depends on bailouts, that accountability means disaster. Instead of Americans owning their own homes as free individuals, the Bush administration has made all of us collective owners of the worthless banks and lenders that ruined the real estate market. Never have so many owed so much to so few.

[WORLD]

## DEBTORS' PRISON

Another question that needs to be raised: should U.S. taxpayers save foreign banks? That's what many Americans are asking themselves following Secretary Paulson's insistence that his rescue plan include non-U.S. financial institutions. Yet the answer is all too clear: we have to, if there's to be a bailout package at all.

As Paulson was quick to point out, in this meta-tangle of global economic disaster, America's debt is also the world's. Deutsche Bank has \$11 billion in investments linked to the U.S. subprime crisis, while \$1.45 trillion—and rising—of Fannie and Freddie debt is held by offshore parties. International finance, and all its festering liability, has become so intricately knotted that it cannot be unpicked along national lines. Commercial monoliths such as Deutsche and HSBC are neither foreign nor domestic, but global. If the Fed lets them sink, the central banks of China, Japan, and other nations, which for years have kept the U.S. afloat by buying dollar bonds, can easily return the favor. We could bring down their markets, but only through eviscerating our own. The global economy has indeed made our world flat—flat broke.

So, taxpayer to the rescue, to the tune of a trillion dollars. But what happens when the citizenry needs bailing out?

[HOMELAND]

## SOCIAL SECURITY

After spending 35 of the last 60 months in Iraq, the 3rd Infantry Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team is taking on a new mission—at home. Beginning in October, the Army will station an active unit inside the United States. The *Army Times* reports that soldiers are being trained to subdue civil unrest and control crowds. No doubt they'll be assured that protecting Hank Paulson's house will be a cakewalk. ■

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# Crash Test

Is it 1929 all over again—or worse?

By Nicholas von Hoffman

Rock-a-bye, trader on the tip top  
When the Board meets, the market  
will rock.  
When the rate rises, quotations  
will fall.  
And down will come trader,  
margins and all.

—*The Wall Street Journal*  
March 29, 1929

AS AMERICAN FINANCE is being twisted and reshaped almost hourly, many worry that we're in for an encore of the galvanic upheavals of 80 years ago. Is this a gruesome economic Groundhog Day?

There are important parallels but also major differences. The America of 1929 was energy self-sufficient. It was a muscular industrial society that imported few necessities. A businessman would have been hard pressed to get a foreign-manufactured safety pin into the country. We owed no foreign nation money; they owed us. We were at peace. The size of the military establishment was about right for a nation that did not believe in pre-emptive war and had no enemies.

We had a new president who, at least on paper, was ideally prepared for the economic holocaust. Herbert Hoover was the only president to distinguish himself as a businessman. In 1907, he started his own company, opening offices in New York, London, San Francisco, and Russia. By 1913, he had some 175,000 employees and was running mining operations around the world. Generations before the term "global economy" was coined, Hoover was practicing it.

By the standards of his time, Hoover was an interventionist, not inclined to remain inert while calamities rained down, although many in both parties thought differently 80 years ago. Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon's recipe for dealing with the Depression was "Liquidate labor, liquidate stocks, liquidate the farmers, liquidate real estate." Ultimately, Hoover liquidated Mellon by making him ambassador to the United Kingdom.

Mellon was of the short, sharp retraction school, which believes an unhampered liquidation of the financially weak blows debt out of the economy fast and enables a quick recovery. The Mellon hypothesis still has adherents, but the politics are too awful for an administration to contemplate since this approach risks throwing 20 million people out of work in months if not weeks.

The 1929 crisis was a stock-market disaster. The 2008 crisis is a bond-market disaster. Yet they have important elements in common. Through much of the 1920s, the Federal Reserve made easy credit available to the nation's banks, which lent money to masses of people to buy stocks on margin. As long as the stock was worth more than the loan to buy it, all was well. The more people got into the market, the higher the prices of stocks went and the easier it was to use the stocks they had borrowed money to buy as collateral to borrow more money to buy more stocks that they did not pay for. Stock prices rose for so long that people came to believe that in the new, modern econ-

omy of the 1920s, prices could only go one way. Substitute the word "house" for the word "stock," and you see what the great grandchildren of 1929 did in the 2000s.

When the price of stocks purchased with borrowed money fell to a point where they were worth less than the loan, buyers had to come up with the money to make up the difference. If they couldn't, the stockbroker from whom they had gotten the loan took the stock and sold it. The same happened with mortgages and the bonds or collateralized debt obligations (CDO's) into which the mortgages were packed. Today, purchasers have to put down 50 percent of the price of a stock they buy on margin, but the investment banks that bought CDO's were putting up as little as 0.3 percent and borrowing the rest.

Thus the underlying mechanics of disaster in 2008 are similar to those of 1929. But there are differences. In 1929, there were no derivatives, those complex deals or arcane side bets that multiply potential losses of billions into trillions. We can thank computers for them. Without electronic computation and record keeping, trading and tracking at such speed and in such volume could not be done. Devilish tricks go back to the days of Daniel Drew (1797-1879), reputed inventor of stock watering, but without modern toys even Ole Dan'l, who went to jail and died bankrupt for the sheer gall of his business crimes, could not have pulled off the tricks we first saw with Enron.

What people in 1929 did with stock, Americans did in the last decade with

real estate, but since Wall Street institutions financed the real estate bubble with bonds they were foolish enough to keep rather than fob off on suckers, the effect on the stock market has been about as dismal as 80 years ago.

With J.P. Morgan's heroics during the panic of 1907 as a model, the big financiers of 1929 attempted a similar act of "organized support" to gin up the market. In a moment that retains a place in Wall Street lore, New York Stock Exchange president Richard Whitney went to the trading floor to place an order for 25,000 shares of the United States Steel Corporation at \$205, \$10 higher than it had fallen. Whitney then did the same for shares in other major companies. The market rallied—but not for long.

The present secretary of the Treasury, Henry Paulson, also tried to put together "organized support" to drive up the swooning stock prices of financial companies choking on worthless CDO's. But would-be supporters were either broke or terrified of buying bonds everybody was calling "toxic waste."

From this point, 1929 and 2008 begin to diverge. After the organized support attempted by Whitney failed, there was nothing to do but ride out a hurricane of wealth destruction—unless the government attempted what the private sector had failed to do. Nothing of the sort had been done before, and although Hoover was a forward thinker, having the government prop up private business was a huge gulp for a man who in his weaker moments blamed the crash on John J. Raskob, a DuPont and General Motors finance executive. A bee got into Hoover's bonnet that Raskob, a Democrat, was the center of a short sellers' conspiracy. A similar bee has been buzzing into our heads, with the result being that short selling of the stock of more than 800 companies has been forbidden by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Hoover, who had the optimism of a successful businessman, was waylaid with spasms of magical thinking. In the summer of 1930, he told a delegation of clergymen asking him to expand public works for the unemployed, "You have come 60 days too late. The Depression is over." But he eventually agreed to a shot at a bailout through the new Reconstruction Finance Corporation, which lent to banks, railroads, and insurance companies. It was not enough money and came too late, though had it been more and sooner, the results may not have been better.

Hoover's slowness may have resulted in part from his having assumed office in March, a few months before disaster struck in October. He had almost four years before he had to run again. The crisis of 2008 arrived in the middle of a campaign. It's impossible not to believe that someone in the White House or the Treasury said something like, "Either we save AIG or McCain loses."

Paulson and Fed chair Ben Bernanke were probably also hurried into action by their knowledge of the huge foreign investments in American financial companies and government bonds. A new drop in the value of the dollar or in their investments might cause the oil Arabs, the Chinese, and many others to stop lending the U.S. money. Moreover, foreign financial institutions, which are demanding that they be included in any rescue program, pose a grisly choice for the administration: accede to foreign demands and face furious reaction just before the election or decline and risk cracking America's economic position in the world, possibly turning it into the new Argentina. Hoover had no such nightmarish alternatives.

Bernanke, who has written a book called *Essays on the Great Depression*, ought to be prepared, if anyone is, to take on this crisis. Yet the America of 1929 and that of 2008 are so unlike as to

be almost different countries. At this writing, Bernanke has not been successful in doing the first thing that the Federal Reserve Board is tasked with—keeping the financial system liquid. That is, making sure there is enough money available that commerce and industry do not starve for lack of affordable capital. Though Bernanke has tried, businesses and individuals are growing parched.

In the intellectual realm, the Hoover-Roosevelt administrations had organized opposition from Marxists and socialists. These small but clangorous political parties offered an ongoing, systematic critique of what the government was doing. Today, the disagreements aren't over basics and don't arise from a different premise and different analysis.

The last contrast between now and then concerns the American people themselves. One may wonder if the men and women whose images were recorded by Walker Evans's camera are to be found in 21st-century America. The greed and stupidity quotient is doubtless the same, but the Americans of 1929 were a grittier bunch. They were more self-reliant, if only because they did not live in a service economy. They were closer to the land and made do with far less. They were thinner, bonier people who did not live as long and worked harder.

Phil Gramm, the former Texas senator, economist, and McCain adviser, got in trouble for saying of contemporary Americans, "We've sort of become a nation of whiners. You just hear this constant whining, complaining..." There is a grain of truth in that. If the hard times do come, they will be harder for us. ■

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*Nicholas von Hoffman is a former columnist for the Washington Post and Point-Counterpoint commentator for CBS's "60 Minutes." He is the author of many books, including, most recently, Hoax.*

# The American Conservative

**To:** Gov. Sarah Palin

**From:** TAC Editors

**Re:** What Your Tutors Aren't Telling You

Congratulations on being chosen as John McCain's running mate. It's an honor, if a dubious one. As you know, conservatives have reservations about McCain. To your credit, they have few such concerns about you.

You've given new life to a party whose brand was bankrupt. You've energized a campaign that was embarrassing its own partisans. Across America, crowds flock to see you—not that old man who barely wheezed his way through the primaries. If John McCain wins, he will owe you, as the guy in the undisclosed location says, "Big time."

Wonder why Middle America finds you irresistible? Maybe they're big Tina Fey fans. More likely, you remind them of the conservative values they feared lost: faith, family, independence. This impression owes more to who you are than what you've done. But at least you keep Obama from cornering the market on hope. Conservatives have faith in you. Don't fail them as George W. Bush has.

You see what happened: the president's entire domestic agenda collapsed under the weight of his failed foreign policy. Social Security reform stalled. Pro-lifers became political orphans. And whatever gains Bush's tax cuts secured were wiped out by record spending. Everything was subordinated to the war on terror.

Conservatives grasping for something to commend give the president points for his judicial picks. But he would have much preferred justices like Alberto Gonzales and Harriet Miers—toadies whose top qualification was their willingness to give the executive more power.

The party that championed the things

you prize—individual liberty, fiscal restraint, and a strong defense—has trampled civil rights, pushed us to the brink of insolvency, and broken our Armed Forces. After eight years of Bush, even diehard Republicans are glad to see him go. You might have noticed the elephant not in the room in St. Paul.

There's a better way. In fact, you figured it out in the 1996 presidential primary when you sported the flair of the leading pro-life candidate. (Your min-ders would prefer that we not mention his name. It triggers their Tourette's.) As you surely know, even beyond social issues, he represents a strain of conservatism that offers a consistent ethic of life and philosophy of limited government. It was not a coincidence that the most pro-life candidate in '96 was also passionately noninterventionist.

It's also no coincidence that those who want you to heed the siren call of global democratization care little for traditionalist causes. Recall that second night of the Republican Convention when you were told to blow off a reception in your honor hosted by Phyllis Schlafly so Joe Lieberman could chaperone your debut before the directors of AIPAC. Neoconservatives pay lip service to life, but, as their enthusiasm for Lieberman shows, they have higher priorities. Now they plan to make them yours.

You'll find the new friends conducting your foreign-policy crash course pleasant enough, if a little dogmatic and a lot condescending. They call you "Project Sarah." We saw that one staffer at AEI—that mystery monogram on all your

briefing books—said you're "a blank slate." He added, "She's going places, and it's worth going there with her." That's how they operate. They don't implement their agenda themselves. Rather, they impose it on rising star. If things don't work out, it's because the Project wasn't sufficiently committed. (Just ask President Bush.)

Now you're the latest object of their attention, and you're probably finding the program a bit confusing. They tell you that the U.S. is fighting "World War IV," a struggle against "Islamofascism." We can win, they say, as long as we're prepared to bomb Iran and build up the national-security establishment at home, just like Reagan did.

Trouble is, your tutors also believe we're still engaged in "World War III," the Cold War with Russia. So maybe the Gipper didn't win that one after all. In fact, neoconservatives like Norman Podhoretz chided Reagan for appeasing Moscow. And when terrorists struck the Marine barracks in Lebanon in 1983, Reagan, instead of "staying the course," withdrew our troops. Your Beltway suitors prescribe the opposite of Reagan's strategy.

And as they would have it, we're not only waging World Wars III and IV, we're still fighting World War II. At least, that's the way it sounds when Robert Kagan opens a *Washington Post* op-ed by likening Russia's conflict with Georgia to Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia.

But Russia is not Germany, Georgia is no innocent Czechoslovakia, and Vladimir Putin is not Adolf Hitler—no matter what your guru Randy Scheunemann says. (He probably forgot to tell



you that he used to lobby for the government of Georgia.)

Here's a hint: don't believe everything you read in the papers, especially if the byline is Kristol or Krauthammer. Russia is not an expansionist, ideological empire. It's a traditional, semi-authoritarian great power intent on preserving its influence in its own backyard and its prestige on the world stage. That's why Russia intercedes in the domestic disputes of unruly states on its periphery. Putin balks at Poland hosting our antimissile systems for the same reason we would bristle at Cuba or Mexico receiving Chinese antitank missiles.

With more validity, some of the people whispering in your ear tell you that Moscow wants to corner the European markets for oil and natural gas. And what nefarious end does Putin have in mind? Raising prices and reinforcing Moscow's political clout, not with nuclear blackmail but with good, old-fashioned economic power. We have plenty of that ourselves (or at least we used to). Putin, far from being a totalitarian ideologue, is an economic nationalist, as the leaders of great powers traditionally have been.

Then there's the Middle East, where only American arms (and lives) can prevent little Israel from being swept into the sea by Muslim hordes. Surely that's what AIPAC told you that night you left Phyllis cooling her heels. But again, it isn't true. Israel has nuclear weapons, for one thing, and can outfight her neighbors even without resort to atom bombs. Israel's problem isn't external threat so much as internal security and demographics. When the Jewish state was founded, tens of thousands of Palestinians—Christians as well as Muslims—lost their homes. Palestine was no wide-open Alaskan frontier: when the newcomers moved in, Arabs were moved out, often by force. Terrorism didn't come to the region with

Hamas or Hezbollah; decades earlier groups like the Stern Gang and Irgun used violence to clear the way for Israel's creation. Nor was Palestinian Authority leader Yassar Arafat the first terrorist to lead a state in the Holy Land. Israeli Prime Ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir had unclean hands as well.

While your minders probably don't put much stock in his work, University of Chicago political scientist Robert Pape has shown that suicide terrorism develops almost always among occupied peoples. The task before the Israelis is not to defend themselves against aggressive neighbors but to give justice to the Palestinians already in their midst—to suppress terrorism without suppressing civil liberties and human rights, which only leads to more bloodshed. The most helpful role the United States can play is that of impartial mediator in the conflict. There is injustice and suffering on both sides.

No doubt you've been told (again and again) that Iran wants to "wipe Israel off the map." Here's something to keep in mind: Iran does not have nuclear weapons and is far from attaining them. Ironically, the Bush Doctrine's pledge that "America is committed to keeping the world's most dangerous weapons out of the hands of the most dangerous regimes" makes rogue states like Iran more likely to seek nuclear devices, as a deterrent against pre-emptive U.S. strikes. This is a vicious circle. Instead of boxing Iran into a corner, we should engage with Ahmadinejad, unsavory fellow though he is. Even with nuclear weapons, Iran would not pose an existential threat to Israel, let alone America.

Since you had some difficulties in your oral exam with Charlie Gibson, your new friends will no doubt ramp up their lessons. (For the record, you can scarcely be blamed for fumbling the answer about the Bush Doctrine. Your

tutors were clearly reluctant to bring it up, even though the whole scheme was theirs, not Project George's.)

They may even start assigning you book reports. It will feel like the third grade, except the subjects won't be charming orphans. Now it's rogue states against America the Benevolent. Near the top of the list will be *An End to Evil* by Richard Perle and David Frum. They'd have you think that Muslims will impose Islamic law on America if we don't go to war with 18 different countries. But you know that a bunch of Muslims can't make red-blooded, moose-hunting Americans wear burqas. Think what happens if you try to get a book pulled out of the library.

That's only the beginning of the curriculum. You'll be handed titles like *Present Dangers* and *The Return of History*. Thankfully, just like third grade, you don't really have to read them. If they ask, just say, "The enemies of freedom won't be appeased. We must stand firm, like Churchill."

Meanwhile, we suggest sneaking a look at *The Limits of Power* by Andrew Bacevich. It's stern stuff, but he gets to the point: America can't spend money it doesn't have, beat everyone up, and expect to stay healthy, wealthy, and wise. If you want a good book on how America screwed up in Iraq, there is *Fiasco* by Thomas Ricks. You said some nice things about Ron Paul during the primary. He gave Giuliani a list of books that might be worth your time.

You'll have to keep your extracurriculars quiet. We know how these things work. Since he helped you break into the big leagues, you have to toe McCain's line. But the outgoing administration has shown us how powerful a veep can be. If you go all the way, President McCain will be in your debt. (If he forgets, ask him how many rallies he held while you were home in Alaska. He wisely opted not to deliver speeches in

phone booths.) Don't leave your maverick spirit on the campaign trail.

Despite all the briefing books being thrown at you, you know your own mind—and you realize that the neoconservative agenda doesn't square with your worldview. You prize localism, their vision is grandiose. You value fiscal discipline, neocons will ruin the country to finance endless war. You honor life, and they think nothing of killing hundreds of thousands in the service of ideology. But they'll tell you this alien vision—imported from the Left—is coherent and conservative.

It is neither, but your supporters are both. They've turned against this war and definitely don't want another. Yet your running mate does. Perhaps you've noticed that his interest in domestic policy pales alongside his foreign-policy ambitions. Or maybe you caught his virtuosic performance of "Bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb Iran."

You surely see that the Bush policies have come to a dead end. If the millions poised to vote for you wanted four more years, the president's approval rating wouldn't be 25 percent. This isn't because Republicans dislike Bush personally or disagree with his positions on energy and taxes. It's because they know that his main legacy—the Iraq War—is a disaster.

Thankfully, they don't think you're like him. They see in you someone like themselves—a patriot and a mother. The Middle Americans waiting hours to hear you speak don't want the United States to be defeated, and they don't want Iraq to be a haven for al-Qaeda—something it never was before the invasion. They are pleased that the surge has made it more possible to leave because they don't want to send their boys back for a third or fourth tour. They want America to come home—not because she's weak but because she's wise. They hope that you are, too. ■

# Whose Palin?

The old Buchanan Brigades now ride to the sound of the neocon guns.

**By Sean Scallion**

PAT BUCHANAN welcomed Sarah Palin to the national scene with a column declaring "she is one of us." But the Alaska governor evidently doesn't think of herself as a Buchananite—at least not today. Through her McCain handlers, Palin denied ever associating with the conservative champion of 1996, even though there's evidence that she not only knew him but was at one time an enthusiastic Buchanan Brigader. As recently as 1999, according to the Associated Press, "Wasilla Mayor Sarah Palin" was "among those sporting Buchanan buttons" at a rally in Fairbanks, Alaska. (She says she would have worn a button for any presidential candidate who visited her state.)

Palin's links to Buchanan were first raised in *The Nation*, which might have hoped to drive a wedge between the McCain ticket and moderates. Yet so far even Buchanan's archenemies, the neoconservatives, seem untroubled by her past. David Frum voiced skepticism of Palin's selection, but more due to her lack of experience than any suspected paleoconservative leanings. Bill Kristol is a Palin supporter, and with good reason: she represents a wing of the Republican Party that was once close to Buchanan but has slid into the neoconservatives' grasp since 9/11.

Palin describes this constituency as "hockey moms" and "snowmobiling dads." Through the years, they've been called "Jacksonians," "Scots-Irish," "Middle American Radicals," "blue

collar," and "lunchbucket" voters. In the 1990s, many also called themselves Buchananites.

In 1992, Buchanan ran against the "Walker's Point GOP" of George H.W. Bush, decrying the loss of American manufacturing jobs and denouncing Bush's capitulation to a new civil-rights act, which the president called a "quota bill" but then supported anyway, to the detriment of working-class whites. Buchanan also attracted religious conservatives with his attacks on the National Endowment for the Arts and its support for X-rated artists. He echoed the frustration of religious conservatives like the Palins over the fact that after 12 years of Reagan and Bush, the culture was more coarse and decadent than it had been in 1980.

When Buchanan ran again in 1996, he called for "a conservatism of the heart" whose appeal was more populist than conservative and tailored to the Palin demographic: higher wages for blue-collar jobs, an end to unfair trade, fighting the rising tide of globalism, and stemming the economic and cultural decline of the two-parent family. This pitch did well in states with large working-class enclaves such as New Hampshire, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, and, of course, Sarah Palin's Alaska, whose caucuses Buchanan won.

There are parallels between Palin's political career and Buchanan's. Her first race for public office came the same year as Buchanan's: 1992. From the Wasilla City Council, she rose to become

mayor in 1996, the year of his second campaign. Like many of Buchanan's culturally conservative voters in the early and mid-1990s, she became politically active thanks to groups like the Christian Coalition and used her church at that time, the Wasilla Assembly of God, as her base. Like Buchanan, she styled herself as a reformer and outsider. Even today, he recognizes her, both literally and figuratively, as his kind of Republican, writing in a recent column: "She is a traditionalist whose values are those of family, faith, community and country, not some utopian ideology."

But by 1999, that kind of Republican was parting ways with Buchanan. When he left the Republican Party to run for the Reform Party nomination, Palin did not follow. She stayed a Republican—supporting Steve Forbes for president in 2000—and began to show a pragmatic streak in her politics as ambition led her to seek statewide office. Palin was a culture warrior talking about banning books and teaching creationism in the schools in 1992, but she wasn't saying such things by the time she ran for lieutenant governor in 2002. Nor did she tie herself to the government-slashing Republican revolution of 1994. After 1996, Mayor Palin hired a lobbyist in Washington, D.C. to make sure Wasilla got its share from the taxpayer trough. She also paid deference to the state's congressional leadership, including senior senator Ted Stevens, and headed up one of his local 527 groups. Courting the establishment paid off: Stevens's late endorsement made the difference in her Republican gubernatorial primary victory in 2006.

Buchanan, meanwhile, won just under 500,000 votes as the Reform Party candidate in 2000, as many of his brigades deserted him. Most, like Palin, stayed loyal to the GOP. The booming economy muted Buchanan's antiglobalist message, while Republican nominee George W. Bush sounded a Buchananite

note by promising a "humble foreign policy." To keep religious voters on board and co-opt the appeal of the Culture War and "conservatism of the heart," the GOP turned from its anti-big-government rhetoric and pledged to open the spigots of federal funding to religious ministries—Bush's "faith-based initiatives"—while hinting at referenda against homosexual marriage and holding out a will-o'-the-wisp promise of nominating judges who would overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

While remaining with the Republicans, Palin did have contact with non-major parties in Alaska, including the Libertarians and the Alaska Independence Party. In fact, she gave an unprecedented address to the AIP's 2008 convention right from the governor's office. (Imagine a Southern governor addressing a League of the South conference or Bernie

anti-interventionist arguments of his 1999 book *A Republic, Not an Empire* might have thrilled old Taft Republicans in the upper Midwest and warmed the ground around Col. Robert McCormick's grave, but they alienated Buchanan's demographic base, which preferred the culture warrior to the anti-warrior. The America First movement had always been weak in the South and border states—with all their bases and military industries and their martial culture extending back to Scots-Irish roots—and the surplus population from those areas continued to settle throughout the country even after World War II, including in Sarah Palin's Alaska.

Palin sounded very much like a Jacksonian in her interview with ABC's Charlie Gibson, in which she denounced Russia for what she perceived to be unwarranted aggression against Georgia

**PALIN WAS A CULTURE WARRIOR TALKING ABOUT BANNING BOOKS AND TEACHING CREATIONISM IN THE SCHOOLS IN 1992, BUT SHE WASN'T SAYING SUCH THINGS BY THE TIME SHE RAN FOR LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR IN 2002.**

Sanders giving a speech at a meeting of the Second Vermont Republic. No need to imagine with Palin—she actually did it.) But this shows more of a libertarian side to her, one that has less to do with Buchanan's conservatism than the politics of Ron Paul, whom she called "a good guy" in a February interview. Her minor-party ecumenism also has much to do with the factionalism of the Alaska GOP. Republican politicians there frequently use minor parties for their own purposes, as former Nixon Interior Secretary Walter Hickel did when he won the governorship on the AIP line in 1990.

The break between Buchanan and Jacksonians like Palin had at least as much to do with foreign policy as with his split from the Republican Party. The

and repeated three times "we cannot second guess Israel." There's no question that much of what she said came straight from Randy Scheunemann and AIPAC—indeed, they might as well have been there holding cue cards. But they can influence her so readily only because their thinking accords with her instincts and her experience. Palin grew up at the climax of the Cold War in the state next door to the Evil Empire; Alaska is a major part of the military-industrial complex; she has a son in the military; and she attends a church where dispensationalism is dogma. Keep in mind that immigration is not much of an issue in Alaska, and Palin's slate of issues clearly has little in common with Buchananism today.



Palin represents not the return of the Buchanan Brigades but, as Daniel Larison has said, the “recreation of the Bush II coalition” of Jacksonian Protestants and neoconservatives. Her presence on the ticket reconnects the voters who supported Mike Huckabee to the Republican establishment from which they were alienated between 2006 and the moment of Palin’s nomination. That’s why Bill Kristol is as much a fan of Palin as Buchanan is: her presence on the ticket reinvigorates the party’s base and gives the GOP a chance to keep Kristol’s friends and associates in power. He knows the neoconservatives need the Jacksonians in order to win, which is why he wasn’t promoting Joe Lieberman as McCain’s running mate.

The Buchanan Brigades of which Sarah Palin was a member are long gone, their ranks now firmly in neoconservative hands. But that doesn’t mean the two strains are inseparable, let alone identical. Palin, as Buchanan has argued in several columns, is not a neoconservative. She has expressed the need for an “exit strategy” in Iraq. And while Jacksonians believe in military strength, they are not necessarily amenable to spreading democracy all over the world using the U.S. military. Palin has an independent streak, as her record suggests, and the supporters she brings to the party are indispensable—they are its margin as well as its base. Because of that, whichever way Palin leans in the future—whether toward the neoconservatives, Ron Paul’s freedom movement, or a resurgent social conservatism and populism—that is where the party is likely to go. ■

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# Stars in their Eyes

In the age of Obama and Palin, glamour matters but so does substance.

By Leon Hadar

WATCHING IMAGES of Barack Obama, Britney Spears, and Paris Hilton intermingling on the “Celeb” commercial and seeing Tina Fey out-Palin Sarah Palin on “Saturday Night Live,” one could be excused for thinking of this year’s presidential contest as a spectacular “pseudo-event,” the term historian Daniel Boorstin coined in his 1961 classic *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*.

Boorstin claimed America was living in an “age of contrivance,” in which illusions and fabrications had come to dominate society. Public life, he argued, has become filled with staged events that stand in for actual happenings. These counterfeit scenes are replete with counterfeit people—celebrities—whose identities are scripted to create storylines that have little relation to reality.

Don’t strain your eyes trying to discern where celeb culture ends and politics begins—the border has blurred. Paris Hilton responded to McCain’s commercial with a campaign spot of her own, offering prescriptions for the energy crisis more creative than anything McCain or Obama proposed. And Jamie Lynn Spears—Britney’s 17-year-old sister who gave birth to a daughter in June—reportedly sent a baby gift to Bristol, Sarah Palin’s 17-year-old daughter, because Jamie Lynn, like, totally understands what it’s like, you know, to be a semi-famous unwed mother.

Fey’s partner in the “SNL” season-opener was Amy Poehler, reprising her role as Hillary Clinton. But the real

Hillary appeared with Poehler during the Democratic primaries to complain about Obama’s superstar status and the infatuation of the media’s own celebrity-correspondents. Pollsters speculate that last season’s “SNL” skits about the media’s love affair may have eroded support for Obama among Democratic primary voters and inspired the McCain campaign’s Paris Hilton ad.

For his part, Obama, concerned about his celebrity image, cancelled his planned appearance on the premiere of “SNL,” although he and McCain are both scheduled to appear on the NBC comedy show before the election. And no wonder: more viewers tuned in to see Fey as Palin than watched the real Palin’s sit-down with Charlie Gibson.

Does this mean that the presidential campaign—playing out against the backdrop of controversial and costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression—is little more than a national reality show, complete with elaborate staging, compelling characters, and an audience vote at the end? It’s the sex idol of the MSM, the netroots, and the entire global village, who texted his VP pick to supporters via his BlackBerry, versus the Republican gun-toting action babe whose first interview was not with Gibson but with *People*.

In Marshall McLuhan’s terminology, have we entered the era of Cool Media, in which television and its accessories—which create a lot of stimulation but

little involvement on the part of the consumer—has overpowered the Hot Media, with its traditional outlets like newspapers providing analytical precision, quantitative analysis, and sequential logic?

Many traditional conservatives feel alienated from this Cool Media, decrying the commercialization and infantilization of a politics increasingly geared for couch potatoes—a cross between “Survivor” and “American Idol.” But many of the same conservatives who cannot cease bashing Obama the Cool, the product of the entertainment-driven political culture they despise, have fallen in love with the other presidential celebrity, Sarah the Wonder Woman.

Unbeknown to most of them, traditionalists share an intellectual kinship with McLuhan, a self-professed conservative Catholic thinker who welcomed the arrival of television. McLuhan speculated that the new Cool Media would help revive old communitarian impulses and religious ritual associated with medieval Europe and the Catholic tradition as opposed to the rationalism and individualism that Protestantism and liberalism helped spread through the Hot Media. A fan of John Kennedy, who thrived at a time when television started exerting more influence on American politics, McLuhan would probably appreciate the instantaneous political rise of Palin. That she is unfamiliar with the nuances of the Bush Doctrine is not important to Americans who see her as the star of a reality show that permits her to project her unique personality traits.

Boorstin, in contrast to McLuhan, was a liberal thinker of the John Dewey school of pragmatism. It emphasized a need to educate the public through a press that provides complete and unbiased information, which ostensibly empowers people to participate in the democratic conversation and then

arrive at rational decisions. From that perspective, Boorstin and other liberal critics wax nostalgic about the days of the Lincoln-Douglas debates—as if our national discourse would be improved by ten-hour exchanges between McCain and Obama. If only the candidates could expound at length on the intricacies of their healthcare plans, the average voter could make an informed choice to vote for Obama since his plan includes a pet-insurance program that offers Viagra to male dogs through age nine. (McCain’s plan only covers up to age six.)

But the notion that before the proliferation of cable channels campaigns were driven by issues rather than personalities—and that now elections are just media events orchestrated by consultants—is a myth propagated by, well, the media. Rewind to the halcyon days of yore, and you’ll discover that two dead presidents now regarded by many historians as great were once bashed as media inventions. Ronald Reagan was nothing more than a B-movie actor, and

where, where the symbiotic relationship between media and politics seems always to be building toward explosive climax. Within the Beltway, you stand accused of disparaging your tribe of reporters, producers, political consultants, and pundits—the Media-Political Complex—if you advance a realist conception of power, in which actual political and economic interests drive the rise, survival, and fall of politicians.

No one denies that political entrepreneurs rely on men of ideas to help them gain power and keep it. Rove’s role was played not so long ago by priests who formulated the divine right of kings and by secular philosophers who legitimized the power of revolutionary dictators. Ideas and images created by intellectuals are used by politicians to mobilize public support. But the manipulation of these symbols and concepts proves effective only if they respond to real needs grounded in voters’ interests. Media manipulation by itself does not win elections, nor can a hostile press always be blamed for defeat.

### THE SAME CONSERVATIVES WHO CANNOT CEASE BASHING **OBAMA THE COOL**, HAVE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH THE OTHER PRESIDENTIAL CELEBRITY, **SARAH THE WONDER WOMAN.**

John Kennedy just a matinee idol, a Rat Pack hanger-on, Jackie’s husband. Then came the Cuban Missile Crisis and the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Welcome to the Kennedy Center. Enjoy your flight out of Reagan National Airport.

Here in Washington, we’re surrounded by Karl Rove and James Carville wannabes who fantasize about making or destroying the next president by whipping up new Watergates or producing more Willie Hortons. We’re immersed in the 24/7 CNN/Fox News universe and captives to the blogos-

phere. But what about the famous “Daisy” spot that Lyndon Johnson ran against Barry Goldwater, or Richard Nixon’s five o’clock shadow during his televised debate with John Kennedy? Johnson was already headed for a landslide victory before the infamous ad aired—which it did only once. Walter Mondale tried to use similar commercials during his 1984 campaign against Ronald Reagan, and he lost. As for the 1960 contest, many historians attribute JFK’s slim margin of victory over Nixon to vote fraud in Illinois and Texas, although eight years later

Nixon was convinced that the only way he could win was by manipulating the media—we call it spinning today—with the help of a group of advertising executives managing his campaign. Joe McGinnis's book on the race was titled *The Selling of the President*; its original dust jacket featured Nixon's face displayed on a pack of cigarettes.

Yet Nixon's victory in 1968 can be better explained by considering the political and economic realities of the time and debates over real issues like the war in Vietnam, race relations, law and order in the large cities, and Republican success in mobilizing support from

student demonstrations during the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago were staged for television ("The Whole World is Watching") and helped transform American politics.

As in the Nixon era, America is now in the midst of a national debate over our role in the world—launching democratic crusades or protecting a more narrowly defined national interest; continuing economic globalization and trade liberalization or using government to preserve American wealth and jobs; immigration and its effect on national identity. The reason that the entrenched establishments of both major parties,

multilateral approach to foreign policy, and his emphasis on engagement with the world suggest a cosmopolitan outlook, while his economic and social views correspond to more secular values.

Alaska, where Palin grew up also gazing at the Pacific Rim, and its economically libertarian, socially conservative, and mostly Christian population, with their high birthrates, represents what remains of the current white majority. Palin's agenda is nationalist on foreign policy and more religious and populist with regard to cultural and economic issues.

Both candidates have achieved a kind of celebrity, but both have tapped major political currents. Neither is a pseudo-event, however much they exploit the media, their star status, and PC strictures on race and gender to their advantage. Indeed, if either ends up occupying the White House and is able to advance his or her ambitious agenda, there is a good chance that Obama or Palin will be hailed as a transformational president like Kennedy or Reagan.

Welcome to the Obama Center for the Global Arts. Enjoy your trip out of Palin Station. ■

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## THE SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL PLAYER IS ONE WHO **RESPONDS TO THE POLITICAL CHANGES OF THE AGE** WHILE MASTERING ITS MEDIA.

voters anxious about perceived threats to their values. Nixon's advisers were successful in manipulating the symbolic environment and may have helped grease the campaign's wheels, but the same ad men joined Nixon in the White House, and they couldn't spin their way out of the Watergate scandal. Don't credit—or blame—Woodward and Bernstein or the liberal media for Nixon's downfall. His resignation followed a political and bureaucratic assault that he failed to contain.

Any comprehensive analysis of contemporary American politics should incorporate the insights of Boorstin's *The Image* and McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*. The successful political player is one who responds to the political changes of the age while mastering its media, which is what Nixon did successfully in 1968 but failed to do during Watergate. Only those pseudo-events that reflect political reality can produce change, while real events need to be packaged for the media in order to make a difference. The

represented by white males like Biden and McCain, are on the defensive—and why Obama tops the Democratic ticket while Palin is the Republican veep—is that more than 80 percent of Americans believe their country is heading in the wrong direction.

Both Obama, a child of the Internet age, and Palin, a former television reporter, have a natural talent for operating smoothly in the new media environment and manipulating it to produce powerful images. But on another level, these two represent real and in some ways dramatic generational, demographic, and political changes in American politics.

Obama is a son of the multicultural and multiracial environment of Hawaii, situated where the rising Pacific Rim meets North America. He is also a member (of sorts) of the non-European minority groups that are expected to become America's new majority. While Obama's political and economic agenda is not detailed or comprehensive, his opposition to the war in Iraq, his more

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# God and Blair at Yale

The first thing to do when the words “Tony” and “Blair” swim into your head is to pray for the grace to be charitable and to avoid the sin of sarcasm (or “irony,” as we

call it in England). The second thing is to ask yourself: Where does this monkey get off? Can he be serious?

Apparently he can—so serious, in fact, that immediately before beginning his teaching stint at Yale he appeared on “The Daily Show.” Only the most serious (and successful) people are invited to receive Jon Stewart’s imprimatur.

It is true that Blair looked a bit uneasy, but he got on a lot better than Sarah Palin at the hands of Charlie Gibson. Mrs. Palin has not yet taken her county to war. Her only crime so far is to have made a public declaration of her opposition to abortion.

Maybe Blair looked awkward because it is beginning to dawn on him that his position is not altogether tenable. Here is a man, after all, who ran what was arguably the most anti-Christian government in the history of Great Britain, who led his country into an unjust and murderous war, and who, within months of leaving office, was received into the Roman Catholic Church without first making a public statement of regret for having so publicly promoted abortion, embryonic stem-cell research, and gay marriage.

Such are the contradictions in his make-up that it is hard not to suspect that he has some unresolved “issues.” There are very often psychological explanations for bizarre behavior. With George W. Bush it’s drink, I imagine; perhaps he is what alcoholics call a “dry drunk.” With Tony Blair other influences could be at work.

He’s always been a hard guy to figure out. Some of you will perhaps have heard of Mark Steyn, a Canadian polemicist and Bush-booster. He and I used to talk from time to time in the 1990s, when I was comment editor of the *Sunday Telegraph* and he was a contributor. What struck Mark about the early Blair was that he seemed a pretty effeminate sort of guy. Apparently in New Hampshire, where Mark lived, the good ole boys had noticed Blair’s Bambi persona, his ingratiating smile, his curly hair, his English accent, and had concluded that he was “one of those.”

Now it goes without saying that it was not funny to suggest that Blair is gay. Blair is not gay, and even if he were, it would not be something to laugh about.

TONY BLAIR IS CERTAINLY **BAD NEWS**, AND **SAD NEWS**, TOO.

This isn’t the 13th century. All the same, I laughed at the thought and continued to do so until one evening about ten years ago when, with my wife and our 12-year-old boy, I was a guest of the late William F. Buckley Jr., most generous of hosts, and his wife Pat.

It was a glorious late summer’s evening in Stamford, Connecticut. The company—two of Pat’s bridge partners joined us—was pretty darned sophisticated, and, stuck for something to say but wishing to appear sophisticated, I raised the possibility that the prime minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was a fruit.

No doubt I lisped a bit and dilated my

eyes. It was not my finest hour. My dinner companions responded by staring earnestly at their plates. I sensed immediately that this was not the moment for one of my vaudeville routines. Mercifully, someone changed the subject. Dinner continued. Life went on.

On the way back to Manhattan, however, I yielded to fear and self-loathing. How could I have behaved so foolishly? And yet ... had my behavior really been that bad? How to explain the cold response to my joke? I turned to my wife for help.

“Are you kidding?” she said. “Did you look those two guys?”

“Yes,” I said. “Jolly decent coves, I thought.”

“Indeed they were,” she said. “But how did they wear their sweaters? Over their shoulders, right? I mean, really. They were gay!”

“Yeah, Dad,” said my boy with a look of exasperated reproach. “It was obvious.”

So no more gay jokes. But Tony Blair is certainly bad news, and sad news, too. There is something wrong with him, spiritually and psychologically. You sense a deep desire to be loved. He goes out of his way to say that he respects those who disagree with him and seems baffled that very few Englishmen are prepared to respect him in return. He thinks it is enough to say that he thought what he was doing in Iraq was right. Obviously, it is not.

Plus he’s such a square. Asked the classic rock and roll question at Yale the other day—Beatles or Stones?—he replied, “The Beatles.” The correct answer, of course, is Chuck Berry. ■

# Goodbye Gordon Gekko

The Crash of 2008, which is now wiping out trillions of dollars of our people's wealth, is, like the Crash of 1929, likely to mark the end of one era and the onset of another.

The new era will see a more sober and much diminished America. The "Omnipower" and "Indispensable Nation" we heard about in all the hubris and bragadocio following our Cold War victory is history.

Seizing on the crisis, the Left says we are witnessing the failure of market economics, a failure of conservatism.

This is nonsense. What we are witnessing is the collapse of Gordon Gekko "greed is good" capitalism. What we are witnessing is what happens to a prodigal nation that ignores history and abandons the philosophy and principles that made it great.

A true conservative cherishes prudence and believes in fiscal responsibility, balanced budgets, and a self-reliant republic. He believes in saving for retirement and a rainy day, in deferred gratification, in not buying on credit what you cannot afford.

Is that really what got Wall Street and us into this mess—that we followed too religiously the gospel of Robert Taft and Russell Kirk?

"Government must save us!" cries the Left, as ever. Yet who got us into this mess if not the government—the Fed with its easy money, Bush with his profligate spending, and Congress and the SEC by liberating Wall Street and failing to step in and stop the drunken orgy?

For years, we Americans have spent more than we earned. We save nothing. Credit card debt, consumer debt, auto debt, mortgage debt, corporate debt—all are at record levels. And with pensions and savings being wiped out,

much of that debt will never be repaid.

Our standard of living is inevitably going to fall, for foreigners will not forever buy our bonds or lend us more money if they rightly fear that they will be paid back, if at all, in cheaper dollars.

We are going to have to learn to live again within our means. The party's over.

Up through World War II, we followed the Hamiltonian idea that America must remain economically independent of the world in order to remain politically independent.

But this generation decided that was yesterday's bromide and we must march bravely forward into a global economy, where we all depend on one another. American companies morphed into global companies and moved plants and factories to Mexico, Asia, China, and India, and we began buying more cheaply from abroad what we used to make at home: shoes, clothes, bikes, cars, radios, TVs, planes, computers.

As the trade deficits began inexorably to rise to 6 percent of GDP, we began vast borrowing from abroad to continue buying from abroad.

At home, propelled by tax cuts, war in Iraq, and an explosion in social spending, surpluses vanished and deficits reappeared and began to rise. The dollar began to sink, and gold began to soar.

Still the promises of the politicians come. Barack Obama will give us national health insurance and tax cuts for all but that 2 percent of the nation that already carries 50 percent of the federal income tax load.

John McCain is going to cut taxes, expand the military, move NATO into Georgia and Ukraine, confront Russia, force Iran to stop enriching uranium, or "bomb, bomb, bomb," with Joe Lieberman as wartime consigliere.

Who are we kidding? We are witnessing today how empires end. The Last Superpower is unable to defend its borders, protect its currency, win its wars, or balance its budget. Medicare and Social Security are headed for the cliff with unfunded liabilities in the tens of trillions of dollars. This is nothing less than a Katrina-like failure of government, of our political class, and of democracy itself, casting a cloud over the viability and longevity of the system.

Notice who is managing the crisis. Not our elected leaders. Nancy Pelosi says she had nothing to do with it. Congress is paralyzed and heading home. President Bush is nowhere to be seen.

Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson and Ben Bernanke of the Fed chose to bail out Bear Sterns but let Lehman go under. They decided to nationalize Fannie and Freddie at a cost to taxpayers of hundreds of billions, putting the U.S. government behind \$5 trillion in mortgages. They decided to buy AIG with \$85 billion rather than see the insurance giant sink beneath the waves.

An unelected financial elite is now entrusted with the assignment of getting us out of a disaster into which an unelected financial elite plunged the nation. We are just spectators.

What the Greatest Generation handed down to us—the richest, most powerful, most self-sufficient republic in history, with the highest standard of living any nation had ever achieved—the baby boomers, oblivious and self-indulgent to the end, have frittered away. ■

# Rose-Tinted Lens

Would Iraqis greet us with flowers? I made sure of it.

**By Tom Streithorst**

FIVE YEARS INTO THE WAR, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and over 4,000 Americans have died. The proud and educated Iraqi middle class has been eviscerated. And America, the birthplace of rock and roll and Marilyn Monroe, the conqueror of the Nazis and the Soviets, for generations a benevolent and powerful force in the world, has been revealed as impotent and petty. The goals of transforming the Middle East, establishing hegemony over the oil fields of Iraq, and demonstrating the invincible powers of the American military have faded. Most of us, except the likes of Norman Podhoretz and Christopher Hitchens, realize the invasion was a disaster. Whom shall we blame?

Blame me. On Feb. 13, 2003, a few weeks before the invasion, I was working as a cameraman for a network news bureau in Kuwait. Our fixer told us that his cousin, a florist, planned to donate 10,000 flowers to children's charities for the youngsters to give to American soldiers to show gratitude for saving them from Saddam. It was a perfect scene: friendly Arabs, cute kids, our brave men about to go into battle. We pitched the story to our bosses in New York.

The boys at the morning show loved it—light and happy, a Valentine's Day bonbon that could still pretend to be a serious look at the impending war. The next morning, we drove to the flower shop and soon realized that we had been duped. No children's charities were involved; the florist had just mobilized his relatives' kids. Had we not agreed to film, he probably would have called the whole thing off. But we

didn't care. We had promised New York this story.

I filmed the shop, the flowers, the smiling kids. As we drove to the U.S. Army base, the florist led his nieces and nephews in chants of "We love Bush." (This did not air. Our producers thought it a little "over the top.")

The response when we pulled up was not what we had planned, not at all what the network expected. The military police, seeing three vans filled with flowers, children, and an American TV crew, incomprehensibly assumed we were terrorists intent on breaching security. They pointed their guns at us, ordered us out of the cars, and told me to stop filming.

This was not what we had promised the morning news. American soldiers terrified of flower-bearing nine-year-olds wasn't the image New York producers wanted to project, not something likely to raise our ratings. It did not matter that this story of fear and misunderstanding and the Army's preoccupation with "force protection" was more interesting, important, and real than the sappy tale we had sold.

Since the florist and his kids had an articulate TV crew with them, they were not arrested, but we were all kicked off the base. The children were disappointed, but that was not our primary concern. We had offered our bosses a Valentine's Day card, and our job was to deliver it. The setup was in the can, but we still needed our punchline: grateful soldiers receiving flowers from happy Arab children. Without that payoff, we didn't have a story.

Our producer proposed that we take our gaggle to a road near the base, and

when an American jeep stopped at the red light, the kids could hand out their flowers. No one need know of the mix-up that made American soldiers point their weapons at little girls armed with begonias chanting, "We love Bush, down with Saddam."

Many have argued that our failure in Iraq was due to the inadequate number of troops sent to police the aftermath of Saddam's fall or the absurd disenfranchisement of the Ba'ath Party (that is to say, Iraq's educated elite) or the dismantling of the army, which left armed men with no way to feed their families. These explanations are all true, but our disaster can also be attributed to the things I saw that February day at Camp Doha.

There are two lessons I want my country to learn from this misadventure. The first is that war involves death, and we shouldn't go in unless we believe the cause deserves our children's lives. If it is not worth putting the Bush twins on point in Sadr City, don't invade. Unfortunately—and probably inaccurately—our military took as the lesson of Vietnam that the American people will accept anything in war except the death of our boys. American soldiers in Iraq were thus told that any time they feared for their lives, or the lives of their comrades, they should reply with deadly force. If a car approached a checkpoint just a little too fast, and one soldier thought he just might be at risk, he was within his rights to wipe out the family inside.

This attitude taught Iraqis that to the U.S., only American life is truly human—scarcely the point of view best suited to winning the hearts and minds of an



occupied people. Establishing security in the Green Zone and ignoring it in the rest of the country, refusing to allow our soldiers to mix with a population that was at least initially thankful for the end of Saddam's tyranny, and not hiring Iraqi truck drivers to convoy supplies are aspects of the same culture of fear that impelled U.S. soldiers to point their guns at children bearing gifts.

The second lesson is that it is very difficult to occupy a nation when you don't speak the language or understand the culture and cannot tell the difference between friend and foe. According to military sources, up to 95 percent of the men we have arrested in Iraq are guilty of nothing, but since we can't speak Arabic, we can't identify the 5 percent who actually are our enemies. Thus we have managed to alienate Iraqis who might have supported our program because, to us, they all look the same.

Outside the base, we still had no luck. Soldiers saw the kids and either sped up or, if the light was red, stopped 50 yards up the road, just in case the tots were terrorists.

Eventually I got bored with waiting and strolled the 50 yards, explained that I was American, and asked if we could film our flower scene. One jeep full of soldiers finally did me the favor, stopped in front of the kids, and with impatience and little gratitude accepted their Valentine's Day gift. I told the producer we had the shot and headed back to our hotel.

Maybe you saw the story that aired the next morning as you were drinking your coffee, getting ready to go to work. It wasn't emblematic of what we observed, but it was the piece we had promised New York. It confirmed Americans' assumption that the war would turn out well, while the reality indicated potential disaster.

I remember, at dinner sometime that month in Kuwait, asking a table of journalists who among us believed Saddam

had weapons of mass destruction. Of the 12, only one did. Perhaps not coincidentally, he was the highest paid of the group. But reading our copy and watching our film clips, would anyone have guessed our doubts? The difference between what we said to each other sitting in the bar after work and what we filed would shock the American public.

Why didn't I do my moral duty to tell the truth? Why didn't I say to the producer that I would not be party to distorting what we had seen? In part, I can excuse my behavior because I just shot the pictures, I did not edit them. But this denies my culpability. I knew what the editor wanted, and I saw it as my job to give him those images. Refusing to film would have been unthinkable, unprofessional. I was just doing my job. So was the producer. So were the military police officers. So was President Bush.

After returning to New York, I told a friend about my experience. She said I should write it down. I laughed and said I couldn't. If I did, I might never work again. I joked that the only way a journalist can lose his job is to tell the truth.

But that's finally what I'm doing. My attack of conscience didn't come in a church but at the cinema. In the movie "Michael Clayton," George Clooney plays the eponymous fixer for a big law firm. He has been paying off witnesses and greasing the wheels of corrupt business for years, and it is beginning to wear him down. This might have been the story of my life, had I been a shyster lawyer instead of just a shyster cameraman. The most fascinating character in the movie is the chief counsel for a chemical firm who orders her minions to kill to protect her interests and her boss's reputation. In most movies she would be arrogant, confident, Satan in a suit. Here, she is simply doing her job—a job she doesn't enjoy very much. She is nervous and sad. Evil just became even more banal.

Michael Clayton called himself a janitor, cleaning up messes for those who could afford his services. In my little way, so am I. Years ago, laughing with bright and funny advertising people, I quipped, "What if we used our talents for good instead of evil?" We don't, of course, because evil pays better.

It is easy to blame the war in Iraq on Bush or Cheney or the neocons or the Israeli Lobby or Halliburton or Congress or the mainstream media. But that's not the whole story. Millions of us marched against the war but then went home and did our laundry or watched TV.

I am not so vain as to think that if I'd refused to film our soldier grunting as a smiling child handed him a bouquet, I would have dismantled all the preparations for war. Perhaps even Colin Powell, had he publicly resigned rather than supporting a policy he knew was misguided, could not have prevented this catastrophe. But if more journalists, State Department officials, and CIA agents had said in public what they believed in private, it might never have occurred. The American people were not enthusiastic about this war. They accepted it—as I did and as General Powell did—as somehow inevitable and therefore not our responsibility.

Would General Marshall have bitten his tongue as Powell did? Would George Kennan have decided that his career in the State Department was more important than telling the truth? Would Edward R. Morrow have praised the president on air while mocking him during late night drinking sessions? I think not. Back then people wrote novels about the temptations and tribulations of "selling out." They don't anymore because "selling out" is now our deepest aspiration. ■

*Tom Steithorst has worked as a cameraman for 20 years. He is currently back in Iraq.*

# America's Mayor

Lou Barletta cleaned up his town. Now he wants to do the same for Washington.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

MAYOR LOU BARLETTA has never left Hazleton, Pennsylvania for long. The grandson of Italian immigrants was born there and attended its public schools. He spent his time outside of class working at his parents' road-construction and heating-oil businesses. He later gave up his studies at nearby Bloomsburg State College to try out for the Cincinnati Reds. Barletta jokes that he came home because he "couldn't hit a curve."

After his major-league disappointment, Barletta returned to work with his three brothers in the family business and married another native Hazletonian, Mary Grace Malloy. In 1984, they started a construction business of their own that later grew into the largest pavement-marking venture in the state.

Barletta's interest in politics only began in the mid-'90s, while raising his four children. Hazleton had fallen on hard times, and Barletta ran for City Council, becoming the only Republican member. Four years later, in 2000, he sold his business and ran for mayor. Now 52, the former road-builder has a clear path from his small city to Washington.

Few other Republicans could make it from Barletta's district to the House of Representatives. Pennsylvania's 11th has been represented by a Republican for only six of the last 80 years, and never for more than one term at a time. Paul Kanjorski, the current Democratic representative, has held his seat since 1985, and the largely Democratic district was nearly made impregnable when, in 2000, the heavily Democratic city of Scranton was gerrymandered into it.

But polling by Franklin & Marshall College shows Barletta beating Kanjorski by nine points, 44-35. An upset in this district, with the anti-GOP political climate of 2008, could give its Republican victor a national profile. But Barletta already has one.

After taking office in 2000, Barletta's mayoralty was dominated by fiscal concerns, but by 2006, the city's problems were almost entirely due to an influx of illegal immigration. "I saw what it did to our hospitals," he explains. "You'll have five- or six-hour waits in the emergency room because illegal aliens use the emergency room for primary healthcare." In schools, the English as a Second Language program exploded. "In 2002, the ESL budget was \$500 dollars," Barletta says. "Today it's over \$2 million. Our population grew by 50 percent, but our tax revenue stayed the same. Obviously, we were providing services to people who weren't paying taxes."

Worse than the unbalanced books was the spike in violent crime. "The final straw," Barletta says, "came on May 10, 2006, when Derek Kichline, a 29-year-old, was shot between the eyes." The shooter, an illegal alien from the Dominican Republic, had been arrested eight times before he came to Hazleton. "He shouldn't have been in the country, let alone my city," Barletta said. Earlier that same day, Hazleton police had arrested a 14-year-old shooting a gun into a crowded playground. "A playground I grew up in," Barletta adds. "He was an illegal alien, and he had his lawyer on speed dial. We had gang-related graffiti

that was threatening the lives of our police officers. So I said, 'Enough is enough.'"

Four months before the Kichline shooting, Barletta had visited the Department of Justice in Washington. "I told them about the problems I was having with illegal immigration. I told them about the gangs. I told them we needed help. And you know what I got? I got a nice coffee mug and a lapel pin." Hazleton could no longer afford to wait on the federal government.

After the shootings, the City Council passed and Barletta signed the Illegal Immigration Relief Act, a get-tough ordinance that would have imposed a \$1,000-per-day fine on landlords who rented to illegal immigrants and would have revoked the business license of any employer who hired illegally. Another ordinance declared English to be the official language of the city.

Suddenly, Barletta became a hero to immigration reformers across the country. He made appearances on the cable news networks, and his ordinances attracted opposition from the ACLU and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

A Clinton-appointed district judge struck down most elements of the housing and employment ordinance, but Hazleton's appeal will be heard by the Third Circuit Court on Oct. 31, four days before the election. Even though the ordinance wasn't permitted to take effect, the illegal population of Hazleton plummeted. Barletta's political stock rose.

The mayors of Pennsylvania awarded Barletta “Mayor of the Year” honors. Hazleton, where registered Democrats outnumber Republicans two-to-one, re-elected Barletta in 2007 with close to 90 percent of the vote. Democratic voters gave Barletta their blessing by staging a write-in campaign for him in their own primary, defeating a candidate from their own party.

But the mayor’s popular response to the illegal-immigration problem is not the only reason he will probably beat Kanjorski. He has “maverick” credentials that would make presidential candidates jealous. When he was first elected mayor in 2000, Hazleton had a \$1.2 million budget deficit on a \$6 million budget. After being sworn in, Barletta cancelled union contracts that had been illegally negotiated by his predecessor. He froze wage increases. “I set a record for most grievances filed at the mayor’s office in one day,” he says. Barletta also halted the patronage system of

asked for a contract to run the city’s buses. Barletta refused and found himself kicked out of the league. He laughs, “Yeah, I had [Sammy] Sosa. I had great starting pitching. It was a good team.”

Barletta’s stand against nepotism contrasts sharply with his opponent’s record. A series of articles in the *Scranton Times* revealed that Kanjorski has directed nearly \$10 million in federal money to family-owned Cornerstone Technologies, a bankrupt tech company that has no assets. The “throw the bums out” sentiment that has been picking off Republicans for the last two years is now aimed directly at Kanjorski.

The Barletta campaign has focused relentlessly on kitchen-table issues. In commercials, “Mayor Lou” says that his campaign is about “the economy, jobs, the housing crisis, healthcare, energy policy, and yes, illegal immigration.” Conspicuously absent from this list is the war on terror. When I ask him whether constituents inquire about his

Barletta is happy to let the offended gun-clingers come to him. At the Mainville Sportsman Club on the rural edge of his district, the mayor held a fundraiser and watched carefully as Ian Jumper—just 14 years old—demonstrated “Cowboy Action Shooting.” Participants wear period dress and fire at targets along an Old Western set. Jumper fixed his black cowboy hat and then blasted his pistol from a rickety wooden shed, knocking down five targets on a moving pinwheel called a Texas star. After he swept another series of targets with a rifle and then a shotgun, the crowd applauded and laughed. Surveying the scene, Barletta supporter Kim Stofler, chairman of the Pennsylvania PAC Firearms Owners Against Crime, chuckled sarcastically, “Yeah, we cling to our guns because we’re bitter.” Barletta gladly received the endorsements of the NRA and the Gun Owners of America that day, pledging to protect the rights of sportsmen and Old West enthusiasts alike.

Barletta’s overwhelming popularity made him an obvious recruit for a GOP in need of challengers—after his last reelection, “I couldn’t even have a meal,” Barletta says, “without someone asking me to run.” But will the GOP get more than it bargained for in Mayor Lou?

Talking to supporters around the gun club, Barletta seems to be from another time. Today’s Republicans give speeches about the Second Amendment, balanced budgets, and controlling borders. Barletta has risked his career for his principles. He says that much has changed for him in the last two years. Mostly, he has learned “to stand up, even if I have to stand alone.”

Back at the range, his supporters worry about losing their beloved mayor, the one who cleaned up the city’s books and then restored law to their streets. But that worry disappears when they begin to think about what he could do in Washington. ■

BARLETTA SUPPORTER KIM STOFLE, CHAIRMAN OF THE PENNSYLVANIA PAC FIREARMS OWNERS AGAINST CRIME, CHUCKLED SARCASTICALLY, “**YEAH, WE CLING TO OUR GUNS BECAUSE WE’RE BITTER.**”

Hazleton politics. “I opened up all the management jobs,” he explains, “These are jobs usually given to friends and relatives. I advertised in the newspapers. We took résumés and did interviews.” He ended his first term with a \$250,000 surplus.

Barletta’s diligence reveals itself even when he discusses his hobby: fantasy baseball. After checking on the sports scores during our interview, Barletta related that he was once a member of a season-to-season “keeper” league, overseen by a close relative. When Barletta became mayor, this same relative bought a transportation company and

position on Bush’s foreign policy, he says, “Not really,” and turns the discussion back to jobs. The word “Iraq” does not appear on his campaign website.

There are cultural issues working in Barletta’s favor as well. The Keystone state didn’t look kindly on Barack Obama’s comments at a fundraiser in San Francisco that people in “small towns in Pennsylvania” are “bitter” and “cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren’t like them, or anti-immigrant sentiment.” Obama is polling below John Kerry’s Pennsylvania numbers, and the McCain campaign is storming the state.



# Gang of Democracies

Woodrow Wilson's dream may yet become our nightmare.

By Justin Raimondo

WHEN I HEAR THE WORD “democracy,” I reach not for my revolver, but for my wallet. I freeze and wait for the next blow to fall: a tax hike, another war, a new form of knavery masquerading as well-intentioned ignorance.

Imagining a “League of Democracies,” as a number of foreign-policy mavens have, I reach instead for the history books and recall the many incarnations—and failures, most of them bloody—of this perennial panacea. The League of Nations, Woodrow Wilson's stillborn brainchild, was supposed to be just such an agency, deterring aggression and enforcing the right of nations to self-determination. The lineage of this idea goes back even farther, originating in the imagination of H.G. Wells, whose 1933 novel, *The Shape of Things to Come*, projected an idealized portrait of an international brotherhood dedicated to Science, Reason, and Order and to cleaning up the mess of a second global conflict. Yes, Wells predicted World War II, which in his version lasted 100 years and culminated in a worldwide plague. Of course, the “Dictatorship of the Air,” as Wells dubbed his legion of world saviors, subdued retrograde elements by means of sleeping gas, which rendered nationalists and other unsuitable persons helpless.

In the real world, it wasn't sleeping gas that gave would-be saviors their power, but armed force, as Lenin realized. Neoconservative calls for an international federation of designated “democratic” nations, which would act in concert ostensibly to defend and extend democracy worldwide, have a distinctly Soviet flavor.

When the Soviet empire was at the height of its expansive phase, advancing into Europe in the wake of Hitler's defeat, it set up “People's Democracies” from Warsaw to Sofia. Of course, these weren't democracies at all but dictatorships coated with the thinnest veneer of “democratic” formalism.

When the Communist-dominated “League Against War and Fascism,” which had previously opposed U.S. intervention in the war, turned on a dime on the Kremlin's orders, this “peace” group of left-wing ministers and hardened Communist cadres changed its name to the “League for Peace and Democracy.” It was the signal that the left-wing “peace” movement was about to defect to the War Party, and, to be sure, the Communists wasted no time in becoming the most ferocious warmongers on the block. Regardless of whether one believes that the war of the “democracies” (including the Soviet Union) against the Axis could have been avoided, the principle holds: when you hear talk of spreading democracy, the beating of war drums is sure to follow.

Instead of a war-making machine, the idea of an international league of supposedly free states is presented as a “Concert of Democracies,” but whatever music is produced will no doubt have a distinctly martial tune. This is no symphony but a pro-American version of the Warsaw Pact.

What we are witnessing is a twisted replay of the Cold War, with the U.S. taking the part of Russia. Adding to the irony, fears of a “revanchist Russia,” as the phrase goes, play a key role in this

push for a more ideological version of NATO. For years, the neocons have been calling for the Russians to be kicked out of the G-8 and forced to suffer diplomatic and trade sanctions. Russia's repulsion of the Georgian invasion of South Ossetia and Abkhazia has given this argument urgency verging on hysteria.

Russia, we are told, is on the march, seeking to reconstitute its lost empire. Never mind that the Russians first need to reconstitute their lost population—their birthrate is decreasing so rapidly that they'll soon be placed on the endangered species list. Yet the threat-mongers are impervious to truth: they are too immersed in the weaving of their narrative that foretells the transformation of Weimar Russia into a nuclear-armed ideological competitor with the West. To this end, Western news outlets are suddenly fascinated with the obscure figure of Alexander Dugin, the chief theoretician of Russian “National Bolshevism,” the “red-brown” current that venerates both Josef Stalin and Peter the Great.

Although his “Eurasianist” movement is marginal, Western journalists are fixated on Dugin, who was recently profiled in the *Christian Science Monitor* and interviewed by the *Washington Times*. He is the founder of the tiny Russian National Bolshevik Party, a group of violent skinheads, which has been visible in protesting the leadership of Vladimir Putin. The National Bolsheviks are aligned in the “Other Russia” coalition with Russian chess champion Gary Kasparov, whose aversion to Putin is shared by the Western media, albeit not by the overwhelming majority of the Russian

people. Dugin split off from the National Bolsheviks and formed an even smaller, more extremist grouplet in reaction to the party's alliance with Kasparov, seen by Dugin as one of the despised liberals. Yet Dugin is just as opposed to Putin as his erstwhile National Bolshevik comrades, blames Putin for capitulating to the West, and dreams of a confrontation with America that he implies may end in nuclear Armageddon.

The idea that Dugin's "Eurasianism" has any influence outside a small circle of obscure Russian ideologues, let alone that it poses a challenge to Western liberal democracy, is a fantasy. Yet if Dugin did not exist, it would have been necessary for the Concert of Democracies crowd to invent him, with his extravagant mysticism and grandiose plans for a Russo-Chinese-Iranian military alliance against the U.S.—an axis that, he insists, may even include Israel.

The man is clearly a self-promoter, but the prophet of a rising ultra-nationalist movement? Not quite. As Masha Lipman at the Carnegie Center in Moscow says, "It's a vast exaggeration to suggest that Dugin is the ideologue behind today's Kremlin leaders. Admittedly, he's been reasonably prominent lately and, apparently, there are people with money and clout among his supporters. But Dugin is vehemently anti-Western, while Putin and Medvedev never forget to refer to the Western world as Russia's partners. None of Russia's leaders wants a new Cold War."

All too many of America's leaders and would-be leaders do want a new Cold War, however, and the Concert of Democracies is a key weapon in their arsenal. The Russian defense of South Ossetia and Abkhazia against the Georgian invasion has renewed the debate over Georgia's admission to NATO, but the Europeans are reluctant—they don't want to go to war for Georgia's dubious territorial claims, and Abkhazia has a

long history as a distinct nation.

If NATO as an instrument of the new Cold War isn't working as the War Party hoped, then the Concert of Democracies is Plan B, one that will have appeal beyond the offices of the American Enterprise Institute and the *Weekly Standard*. Neoconservative internationalists, such as Robert Kagan, are reaching out to liberal internationalists, such as Ivo Daalder of the Brookings Institution: the two recently authored an op-ed in the *Washington Post* calling for the establishment of such a league to fulfill "the responsibility to protect." Daalder is an influential advisor to Barack Obama's presidential campaign, while Kagan, *Newsweek* noted, is "McCain's foreign policy guru."

To protect whom against what? Kagan elaborated on this elsewhere, ripping a few stray phrases out of a speech by Sergei Lavrov to justify the need for an explicitly ideological response to Russia: "For the first time in many years," Kagan quotes the Russian foreign minister, "a real competitive environment has emerged on the market of ideas" between different "value systems and development models. ... the west is losing its monopoly on the globalization process." "True or not," Kagan avers, "democracies should not be embarrassed about holding up their side of this competition. Neither Beijing nor Moscow would expect them to do anything else."

But here is what Lavrov really said:

It is thanks largely to the strengthening of Russia that, for the first time in the last decade and a half, a real competitive environment has taken shape in the market of ideas for a world pattern adequate to the contemporary stage of world development. The rise of new global centers of influence and growth, and more even distribution of development resources and of

control over natural wealth lay down the material basis for a multipolar world order.

A multipolar world is not set for confrontation. It's simply that new power centers are objectively coming into being. They compete, particularly for influence and access to natural resources. Such was always the case and there is nothing fatal about this.

In the neoconservative universe, a plea for peace is a declaration of war. Facts that get in the way of good fiction—such as the historical animosities between China and Russia, which prevent the creation of a Sino-Russian Co-Prosperity Sphere—are cast aside.

From neoconservatives who long to thrust into the steppes of Central Asia to weepy liberals who attend rallies demanding that the U.S. "do something" about Darfur, the concert concept has the potential to mobilize broad support. If it is implemented, it will be interesting to see how the principals finesse the "democratic" credentials of America's allies, such as Georgia, where President Mikheil Saakashvili jailed the opposition on charges of treason, ordered his thugs to seize an anti-government TV station, and beat pro-democracy demonstrators, injuring 500. On what grounds will the concert ignore the referenda held in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which ratified their bids for independence?

The Concert of Democracies—it sounds like a television series, and the Hollywood aspect of this project is perhaps its most interesting feature. The idea is to set up a narrative: the brave little democracies of the world backed up by their big brother in Washington, up against the world's bullies. But will the public buy it? ■

*Justin Raimondo is editorial director of Antiwar.com.*

# Country First?

Randy Scheunemann isn't the only foreign agent with McCain's ear.

By Kelley Beaucar Vlahos

IT WAS THE STORY that dared Americans not to care—Iraqi soldiers yanking babies out of incubators in Kuwait and leaving them to die. The grisly tale turned out not to be true, but it was the hook that drew the American public into the Persian Gulf War and earned the PR wizards at Hill & Knowlton every dime of the \$10.7 million they took from the emir of Kuwait.

Hill & Knowlton, backed by the first Bush administration and sympathetic lawmakers eager to protect oil interests in Kuwait, orchestrated a hearing before the House Human Rights Caucus. The Oct. 10, 1990 event featured a witness—the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the U.S.—who hadn't seen the incubator incident. But the truth didn't emerge until it was too late. Due to “firsthand” accounts of atrocities from other “witnesses” coached by Hill & Knowlton, the narrative caught fire. Soon President George H.W. Bush was repeating the trope, and the intervention was transformed from war for oil into a humanitarian mission for incubator babies “scattered like firewood across the floor.” Within months, the Kuwaitis, with the help of the best American flacks money could buy, got their war.

About the same time, veteran Republican operative and lobbyist Charlie Black, who now serves as McCain's chief campaign adviser, was getting rich by vouching for the integrity of U.S.-backed kleptocrats such as Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire, brutal military rulers like Siad Barre in Somalia, and Jonas Savimbi, the guerilla leader who for

years peppered Angola with land mines and left a generation of shell-shocked children without limbs.

More recently, his firm, Black, Kelly, Scruggs & Healey, represented Iraqi exile Ahmad Chalabi, the one-man show who tap-danced his way across Washington convincing the elite that a pre-emptive showdown with Saddam was vital to our interests. When the post-invasion didn't go as planned, BKSH was commissioned by the shadowy Lincoln Group for “psyops”—planting happy but not necessarily real stories about the U.S. occupation in the Iraqi media for the Pentagon.

BKSH, working Chalabi and the neo-conservative agenda into the embrace of the foreign-policy establishment before and after 9/11, got their war—and they may get more, judging from their client lists. Thanks to the Foreign Agent Registration Act—passed in 1938 in response to Nazi interests hiring American PR pioneer Ivy Lee for \$25,000 to soften the image of Hitler's Germany for American consumption—we can see who's working for whom. We can also note that BKSH and their contemporaries—Republican and Democrat—have galloped through decades of military coups and bloody civil wars, advancing the agendas of Saudi princes, oil sheiks, and numerous dictators at the peril of U.S. economic and national security.

“The notion that we can let foreigners define our foreign policy without injury to us is naïve and childish,” charges Stephen Van Evera, who teaches international relations at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

By now most political observers know that Black and others like him move in the inner circles of John McCain's presidential team, even if some of his political operatives and fundraisers were forced to quit under new anti-lobbying rules introduced by McCain in May. Among them were Doug Goodyear and Douglas Davenport, McCain's pick to head the Republican National Convention and his mid-Atlantic regional campaign director respectively. Their lobbying firm, DCI Associates, had represented the repressive military junta in Myanmar in 2002. Key McCain fundraiser Thomas Loeffler was also forced out because of his firm's work with defense contractors and foreign governments. One contract with Saudi Arabia earned his company nearly \$10 million for smoothing the kingdom's entry into the World Trade Organization in 2005.

But Black, a veteran of Republican campaigns dating back to Ronald Reagan, remains McCain's top policy adviser. McCain's campaign manager is Rick Davis, a pre-eminent Washington lobbyist and GOP operative whose lobbying partner Paul Manafort worked with Black on several foreign accounts under a separate PR firm. Although both Davis and Black reportedly quit lobbying—Black as recently as March—their firms continue to reap benefits from foreign contracts. Their connections still run deep, and their appetite for winning at all costs remains strong.

These instincts dovetail so seamlessly with McCain's bloodlust that the

teaming is almost natural. Unfortunately, the senator's proudly unreconstructed approach to international events makes it hard to discern where the spin from former lobbyists (and their clients) ends and his own gut—and that of his more résumé-challenged running mate—begins.

"[Charlie Black] is not loyal to America, he is loyal to his client list—that's how he makes the big money," Van Evera complains. "Anyone who thinks he won't continue to be loyal to his clients after McCain gets into office is smoking something." One needs only to look at top McCain foreign-policy aide Randy Scheunemann to see the blurring line between client and country. When McCain suggests there will be "severe, long-term negative consequences" for Russia if it doesn't leave Georgia alone, how do Americans know that isn't the \$800,000 Scheunemann's lobbying shop has gotten from Georgia since 2004 talking?

Public records show that Scheunemann received payments from foreign governments—including Georgia, Macedonia, and Taiwan—while he was part of the McCain campaign in 2007. He quit Orion Strategies LLC in May, but the two-man firm he helped build still has an open registration with Georgia, according to FARA. He personally began lobbying McCain's Senate office on the Georgia issue in 2004.

Meanwhile, McCain has engaged in meetings and phone calls with Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, coauthored at least one bill requesting \$10 billion in aid, and has been a vocal advocate for getting Georgia and Ukraine, where Davis's firm had at least one contract advising the opposition party this year, into NATO.

Russia has responded hotly to the tough talk and to reports that the U.S. had been beefing up the Georgian military. Meanwhile, U.S. ally Israel has

been providing sophisticated weaponry to Saakashvili under the radar. In response, Russia has stepped up its overtures to Iran. A proxy showdown between Israel and Iran, a scenario Scheunemann and his fellow neoconservatives at the Project for a New American Century envisioned when targeting Iran for regime change a decade ago, may be in the offing.

Sarah Palin, fresh from tutoring by Scheunemann, predictably told ABC's Charlie Gibson that Russian aggression toward Georgia was "unprovoked" and "unacceptable," and that the U.S. can't "second guess what Israel has to do to secure its nation."

Craig Holman, a researcher for Public Citizen, wonders through which filter Palin was getting her talking points, given that her pre-nomination foreign policy seemed at the best an empty vessel: "It certainly raises the specter of whether this advice is based on principle or based on money. These foreign governments are paying millions of dollars to these lobbyists. ... Who are they going to be representing when they are teaching someone else about foreign policy?"

McCain's campaign has complained that Barack Obama's team has avoided similar scrutiny, but none of Obama's paid operatives have the foreign lobbying experience of Scheunemann, Black, and Davis. An easier target is Hillary Clinton's former campaign, which was sprinkled with lobbyists past and present.

Clinton's chief strategist, Mark Penn, was called out during the campaign for his dual role as her counselor and the CEO of Burson-Marsteller, one of the biggest lobbying firms in Washington—and parent company of BKSH. It has represented scores of foreign governments, including the former Suharto regime in Indonesia, the Saudis, and a handful of countries south of the border pushing for free-trade agreements.

The McCain campaign did not return TAC's request for comment. When confronted by the *Washington Post* in May, Black said his firm never took money from foreigners "without consulting the State Department first" and would drop a client as soon as the U.S. government severed ties. For example, he claims that his firm stopped representing Mobutu, who ruled Zaire with a bloody fist for three decades, after he refused to hold elections in 1993.

But nothing stopped Black, Manafort, Stone & Kelly from taking a new \$15,000 monthly contract with Savimbi in late 1994—a year after he walked away from legitimate elections and continued "raping and pillaging" across Angola, said Ken Silverstein, Washington editor for *Harper's*, who wrote "Their Man in Washington: Undercover with D.C. Lobbyists for Hire" in 2007. Silverstein found that top lobbying firms—many led by administration officials in the last three White Houses—were eager to represent the most unsavory of clients given the right price. Washington was embarrassed—for about two minutes.

Silverstein suggested to TAC that Black and friends knew what their clients were about all along. Caring was not part of the contract. But that doesn't change the fact that these characters would never enjoy high-level access if Beltway fixers were not obscuring their atrocities and trumpeting their agendas.

Americans might have expected that a candidate who claims "it's over for the special interests" would refuse to play the lobbyists' game. Just the opposite: John McCain seems to think that foreign agents make ideal advisers. So it should come as no surprise that, from Tbilisi to Tel Aviv, he has trouble distinguishing other countries' interests from our own. ■

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# Power Play

You don't need a military to pull off a coup. Ideas will do.

**By Claes G. Ryn**

A WEAKNESS of traditional Western political thought has been a tendency to disparage a desire for power. Following Plato, many moralists have associated political virtue with a reluctance to pursue and exercise command. To want to rule others is to be morally disqualified from doing so.

This is an unfortunate prejudice. Without some people governing others, basic social order could not exist, to say nothing of effecting desirable change. The prejudice against power-seeking has left politics too much to people with the wrong kind of ambition, most of whom desire power as an end in itself. Yet wanting power need not be immoral. Pursuing it can be a means to good.

Even a self-serving desire for power must portray itself as a wish to assist others. If you are able to persuade them that the present world is grossly oppressive and destructive of human happiness but that you can make it infinitely better, they may support mobilizing massive power and placing it in your hands. The more ambitious your scheme for benevolent change, the greater the need for power.

Since the French Revolution, ideologies have been exceptionally conducive to power-seeking. Jacobinism, Communism, and National Socialism are alike in promising glorious change and assuming the desirability of granting vast power to those who know what needs to be done. A few years ago, David Frum and Richard Perle provided an all-purpose justification for unlimited power: putting "an end to evil," the title of their

co-authored book. Now there is a noble and ambitious goal! That rooting out evil might be an endless task only increases its appeal to a ravenous will to power. We are, of course, supposed to believe that the connection between advocating sweeping, wonderful change and needing great power is purely coincidental.

Jacobinism and Marxism were openly revolutionary. They were the ideologies of out-groups challenging existing elites. What this writer has called neo-Jacobinism is the ideology of members of America's elite who wish to make the might of the United States a more pliant and powerful tool and who are attempting a creeping coup d'état from within. According to their ideology, virtuous American power should create a better world based on allegedly universal principles. Their main excuse for exercising extra-constitutional power is to combat terrorism.

The rise of a huge, centralized federal government and the corresponding decline of limited, decentralized government resulted from changes deep in the American imagination. The new Jacobins have taken advantage of the fading of the old ethos and hasten its disappearance by advocating notions incompatible with it.

The old American idea of government was indistinguishable from the commandment to "love thy neighbor." That morality stressed the importance of the person trying to control his own evil and weakness. Strength of will—character—had to be built up so that people would become capable of more loving familial and local relationships and more responsible citizenship. This made for strong

communities and self-reliance and minimized the need for government. Alexis de Tocqueville pointed to the great reluctance among Americans in the early 19th century to give up power over their own lives to any distant authority.

The Constitution thus rested on an unwritten constitution—America's religious, moral, intellectual, cultural, and social habits and beliefs. Traditional America encouraged a strong attachment to self-restraint, modesty, respect for law, and a willingness to compromise. It was this heritage that brought into being the constitutional personality. Just as people were in the habit of imposing internal checks on desire, so were they predisposed to accept and respect external constitutional constraints. Without such people, the Constitution could not work as intended.

But the self-understanding of Americans has slowly changed. They began to abdicate authority to benevolent-sounding politicians. An older personality, which the Constitution both assumed and required, began to disappear. The new culture of America and the West generally disparages this tradition. It shifts attention away from intimate associations and local community. For the new culture, morality is not found in personal acts of character toward particular individuals—neighbors—but in "idealistic" caring for unfortunate collectives and mankind at large. Increasingly, doing good has been made the responsibility of government, which alone can take on the massive projects said to be demanded by morality. Gov-

ernmental, collective action replaces private and communal responsibility. The decentralized society withers. Today, centralized federal power seems to most Americans not merely acceptable but desirable.

Much of the intellectual opposition to this trend has been confused and self-defeating. A prime example is the way many conservatives, thinking that they were shoring up traditional beliefs, attached themselves to the ideas of Leo Strauss, whose disciples became a major force in American academia and national politics. A refugee from Nazi Germany, Strauss taught for many years at the University of Chicago. Because he appeared to defend a classical, ancient notion of universal moral right, many did not notice that he was actually discrediting respect for tradition.

According to Strauss, no real philosopher gives credence to “the conventional” or “the ancestral,” to use his terms. Respecting them represents the greatest of all intellectual sins, “historicism.” Inherited ways are, he insisted, mere accidents of history. Respect is owed solely to “the simply right,” which is ahistorical and rational. Strauss sharply criticized Edmund Burke, who saw the possibility of moral universality acquiring historical form.

By propagating a rationalistic, anti-historical notion of moral right, Strauss and his disciples created a deep prejudice against cherishing America’s distinctive, historically evolved Christian and British past. But this was the cultural heritage that nurtured the inner and outer restraints of American constitutionalism. Because Straussian anti-traditionalism has confused and weakened so many who wanted to defend that heritage, it has been in some ways more destructive than standard liberal anti-traditionalism.

Despite plentiful ceremonial praise for the Constitution and orgies of consti-

tutional legalism, we are living through the progressive dismantling of America’s proudest political achievement. One sign of the precarious condition of the Constitution is that many imagine that it could be restored by electing more politicians sympathetic to its tenets and by having more “strict constructionists” appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

But the old American constitutionalism is inseparable from the moral-spiritual culture that gave it birth. Limited government and liberty were made possible by people who, because of who they were, put checks on their appetites, ran their own lives and communities, and generally behaved in ways conducive to freedom under law. Restoring American constitutionalism would presuppose some kind of resurgence of that old culture. Americans would have to rearrange their priorities and start acting differently, placing more emphasis on family, private groups, and local communities. They would have to want to take back much of the power ceded to politicians far away. Is that likely to happen? If not, the Constitution may not be salvageable.

The time has certainly come to consider what might take the place of American constitutionalism. That so many admirers of the Constitution are prone to nostalgic dreaming and intellectual passivity is a sign of moral and intellectual paralysis.

But there are people who have thought for a rather long time about what should replace the Constitution of 1789. They include leading Straussians and neoconservatives who have masked their agenda by pretending to defend what is being lost.

They warn against abandoning America’s “founding principles,” though they refer not to the ways and beliefs of the Founders but to abstract principles of their own devising that they falsely

attribute to revered historical figures. They caution against the “closing of the American mind”—the title of Allan Bloom’s 1987 best-selling book—but the mind they want kept open is not the old American mind but their own version of the Enlightenment mind. They worry about American cultural decline, as measured some years back by William Bennett’s “cultural indicators,” but what they want is not the old American virtues of neighborliness, localism, self-control, compromise, and the rule of law, but the purported virtue of vigorously asserting universal principles in the world. The new Jacobins disdain moral hesitation and ambiguity, demanding what they call “moral clarity.” You are either on the side of good, spreading “democracy” or “freedom,” as they understand them, or you are siding with the enemy.

They have a double message. On the one hand, they tell Americans that their society is in great danger: It is threatened domestically by fragmentation caused by lack of virtue and patriotism, by moral nihilism, historicism, and multiculturalism. And it is threatened from abroad by terrorism and Islamofascism. On the other hand, the new Jacobins want to be reassuring: Be not afraid! We, the patriotic champions of American principles, are here to protect you. We promise you order and security and an America committed to right in the world.

Their notion of America reveals its alien origins even in strange-sounding language, as in the name “Department of *Homeland Security*.” They are popularizing un-American ideas of governance, notably the so-called “unitary” executive—the notion of the pre-eminence of the president, who is to be as little constrained as possible by checks and balances and the rule of law. Their goal is wholly at odds with the constitutionalism of the framers.

Lest too many worry about the expansion and centralization of federal

power, the neo-Jacobins do not let Americans forget even for a day the great danger of terrorism. A country that spends almost as much on its military and national security as the rest of the world put together has to tremble continuously before possible threats. People who resist the progressive erosion of American liberties are portrayed as unpatriotic and a threat to national security.

Those who would protect us are advancing the coup from within by teaching us to associate American security and virtue with the leadership of a strong man—a trademark of hardened standard liberal thinking. In the mid-20th century, academics like James MacGregor Burns inspired a cult of the presidency. Burns, who eventually became president of the American Political Science Association, advocated popular rule through strong presidential leadership in the Roosevelt-New Deal mode. He knew well that this notion flatly contradicted the framers, who opposed “democracy” and assumed that if any branch of the U.S. government were pre-eminent, it would be the Congress. Now it is Straussians and neoconservatives who most extol strong executive leadership and more muscular federal government. They see the powers of the executive as trumping those of the other branches, especially at a time of national emergency. Then the president must embody and express the will of the nation as he sees fit.

Harvard’s Harvey Mansfield is the intellectual figurehead of those attempting to justify this coup. Basing his argument on a transparently strained and unhistorical interpretation of the framers, he has stressed in *The Wall Street Journal* and elsewhere that the rule of law has drawbacks, “each of which suggests the need for one-man-rule.” For one thing, the law can produce

*Continued on page 34*

### **CIA Director Michael Hayden shed some light on an old mystery**

in a speech delivered in Los Angeles on Sept. 16. He said, “We were able last year to spoil a big secret, a project that could have provided Syria with plutonium for nuclear weapons.” Referring to the building near the Syrian town of Al-Kibar, destroyed by an Israeli airstrike on Sept. 6, 2007, he attributed the success to intelligence collaboration involving a “foreign partner” that provided the initial information that led the CIA to initiate a more detailed investigation. “Our foreign partnerships ... were critical to the final outcome,” he said. Hayden’s unwillingness to name the Israelis as the “partners” is curious. He also concealed the rest of the story—the CIA was able to provide information that convinced both Israel and the White House that the building was a reactor modeled on a prototype in North Korea and that the Syrians were constructing underground pipes leading to the Euphrates River to cool the project. Even though Agency analysts were not convinced that the assessment was solid, the Israelis made the decision to bomb the building, and the White House gave the green light. Hayden’s depiction of the war-by-proxy bombing as a major blow against proliferation is somewhat overwrought. The building, if it was truly intended to be a reactor, was still far from being operational and would have needed years to produce enough plutonium for a weapon even if uranium could be found to provide fuel.



### **Early this summer the intelligence community was also involved in discussions regarding the utility of staging attacks from Afghanistan into Pakistan to disrupt the Taliban and al-Qaeda.**

A number of assessments based on possible scenarios all concluded that the outcome would be very bad if U.S. troops were to enter Pakistan, or if U.S. aircraft and drones were to step up their bombing. One assessment noted that the United States has no right under international law to attack a country with which it is not at war, and there was general agreement that poor intelligence resources would mean that an increase in forays into Pakistan would neither cripple the Taliban nor eliminate al-Qaeda and would only produce civilian casualties. The analysis of Pakistani politics concluded that politicians supporting the war on terrorism would be marginalized, popular sentiment would become even more violently anti-American and pro-terrorist, and factions within the military and the intelligence service would refuse to co-operate with their American counterparts and even sabotage efforts against the insurgent groups. Pakistan would also certainly cut off the supply line from Karachi that sustains allied troops in Afghanistan. A worst-case scenario saw Pakistan descending into political chaos, with a wave of political assassinations preceding the army’s refusal to fight tribesmen or obey orders from politicians in Islamabad. A civil war might ensue and would raise serious questions about the security of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal. In spite of the intelligence community’s concerns, President Bush personally ordered Central Command to begin attacks inside Pakistan whenever “actionable intelligence” is obtained.

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# Arts & Letters

## FILM

[*Appaloosa*]

### How the Western Was Won

By Steve Sailer

THE BALD AND SQUARE-JAWED actor Ed Harris has played American heroes and psycho killers since first drawing notice as astronaut John Glenn in 1983's "The Right Stuff." He's now written and directed "Appaloosa," an amiable Western about masculine camaraderie and honor adapted from the book by Robert B. Parker, the genre novelist who created Spenser, the Boston private eye. "Appaloosa" furnishes Harris and Viggo Mortensen with plenty of wry lines in their portrayals of itinerant lawmen in the New Mexico of the 1880s. Fish do not feel wet, we are told—although on what authority, I cannot say.

Cowboys and Indians movies once felt no more awkward than cops and robbers films do today. Westerns were then less a genre than a natural, default mode. In the early 1970s, however, urban crime dramas, such as "The French Connection" and "The Godfather" replaced Westerns as the norm. The Western has since become a highly self-conscious genre, one almost immobilized by the weight of its pre-1970 cinema history.

As an actor, however, Harris appears unburdened by all the film-school baggage the genre has accumulated. The straightforward "Appaloosa" provides

two outstanding roles and sundry old-fashioned pleasures.

By churning out countless cowboy movies, Hollywood had helped enshrine the idea that America was built by frontier settlers. The decline of the Western coincided with the rise in self-awareness of the descendants of Ellis Island immigrants. By 1970, the grandchildren of Ellis Island wished to assert a new vision. America, their movies implied, was built not by pioneers, but by Catholic and Jewish immigrants, especially the gangsters and policemen of the big cities. Thus Martin Scorsese spent over 30 years and more than \$100 million to film the 1928 book *Gangs of New York* to push his mobocentric theory of American history back into the mid-19th century. The tagline for his movie was "America Was Born in the Streets."

Both Westerns and Urbans offer promising plots for movies because they depict a Hobbesian world where life is full of interest. Modern crime movies are about the grim business of maintaining order. Westerns, in contrast, tend to be sunnier because they are about establishing order, forging a legitimate monopoly on violence.

In "Appaloosa," Harris portrays the marshal, a man whose gun hand gets steadier the more the adrenalin flows. He's honest, courageous, professional (he always reloads his six-shooter instantly after killing a bad guy—you never know when you might need to shoot another one) and perhaps not quite right in the head. Mortensen is his deputy, better educated (a West Point grad), but content to follow his boss's lead because the marshal's slightly demented heroism provides him with a moral compass.

The burghers of Appaloosa hire the pair to bring the law to their dusty town

terrorized by the gang of a rich rancher turned brigand (played by Jeremy Irons, using Daniel Day-Lewis's I-drink-your-milkshake Mid-Atlantic accent). Harris and Mortensen pin on their silver stars, ask a few hotheads to come quietly, shoot those who won't, and soon order is instituted.

Then disorder arrives on the train in the comely form of a tightly corseted widow, played by Renée Zellweger. The actress endures a lot of flak for her scrunched-up facial features, but she's well cast here as a seemingly refined lady. She is looking for a Wild West town with such a high male-female ratio that nobody will notice she's not Lillie Langtry while she's on the prowl for the reigning alpha male.

The deputy is immediately smitten, but she doesn't notice him because he's only a beta. When the marshal briefly goes off his rocker and brutally beats a harmless barfly for using vulgar language in front of a lady, he wins her heart and they quickly marry. To her disappointment, that savage moment proves anomalous. Mostly, the marshal is good at keeping the peace. Bored, the missus starts looking for trouble, which, quickly enough, finds her.

Westerns usually have happy yet bittersweet endings. The law-enforcing man of violence triumphs, making the settlement finally safe for children and schoolmarms. The tamed town no longer needs a hero, so he rides off into the sunset, obsolete but majestic.

Ed Harris isn't the most expert of directors, but his chemistry with Mortensen overcomes the occasionally off-kilter editing and inadequate score, making "Appaloosa" the best traditional Western since Kevin Costner's "Open Range." ■

Rated a soft R for some violence and language.



## BOOKS

[*Reclaiming the American Right: The Lost Legacy of the Conservative Movement*, Justin Raimondo, ISI Books, 369 pages]

# What's Left of the Old Right

By Anthony Gregory

*Human Events*, the periodical that takes credit for “leading the conservative movement since 1944,” has indeed captured the spirit of conservatism since its inception. Felix Morley, opponent of political centralism and foreign war, co-founded the publication; six years later he broke with it over the Cold War. Today, he wouldn’t recognize it.

Now the paper generally offers undying loyalty to American aggression, the GOP, and the official Right’s talking points. It features shrill partisan commentators such as Ann Coulter and knee-jerk attacks on all things Democratic or “Islamist.” At the same time, however, *Human Events* also publishes Pat Buchanan, dissenter from Bush’s (and McCain’s) foreign and domestic policies and critic of U.S. wars going back to the 19th century. This dissonance reflects the central paradox of conservatism today—the tension of supporting both traditional limited government and the expansionary warfare state.

To strengthen one’s grasp on the struggle within modern conservatism, I recommend Justin Raimondo’s *Reclaiming the American Right*, first published in 1993 and now reprinted with a new introduction by George W. Carey and critical essays by Scott P. Richert and David Gordon.

As Raimondo tells it, the American Right was hijacked shortly after it was formed. The Old Right “was that loose grouping of intellectuals, writers, publi-

cists, and politicians who vocally opposed the New Deal and bitterly resisted U.S. entry into World War II.” It comprised Hoover Republicans, disaffected progressive Democrats, individualists, and Middle American populists who wanted freedom and peace. Its members survived and opposed the early Cold War before being crowded out by the New Right.

The antagonists here are big-government conservatives, from William F. Buckley Jr. to the neocons. Raimondo examines several waves of destructive infiltration into the Right by leftists. James Burnham, who broke with Trotsky over support for the Soviet Union, personified the first coup. He abandoned the dialectical materialism that saw communism as inevitable and, in his famous *The Managerial Revolution* (1941), he described a “new ruling elite ... made up of administrators, technicians, scientists, bureaucrats, and the myriad middlemen who have taken the means of production out of the hands of the capitalists.” He cheered the Cold War for regimenting American society and in 1953 became associate (later senior) editor at *National Review*. He was, Raimondo notes, “a decisive influence on what was to become the fountainhead of American conservatism.”

The second round of infiltrators was led by Max Shachtman from the Trotskyite Workers Party. Shachtman believed that “Stalinism had become the barbarism predicted by Trotsky” and that “there was no ... alternative to the totalitarian brutality of the Kremlin except the imperfect but democratic United States.” Eventually, the Shachtmanite “conception of Stalinism ... as the ‘mortal enemy of Socialism’ ... became the ideological cornerstone of anticommunist leftism in the late 1950s.” The anti-Stalin Left blended in with conservatives, accepted propaganda financing from the CIA, and embraced the Cold War—often in the name of socialism. The Right became home to ever more ex-Communists, Trotskyites, social democrats, and a myriad of pro-war liberals. Neoconservatism rose in intellectual influence.

It is tempting, therefore, for anti-interventionist rightists to decry the hawks among them as imposters and perpetual war as a leftist program smuggled in by socialists with no claim to true American conservatism. But such a thesis oversimplifies. Much of the World War I opposition came from the Left, as did many of our Old Right heroes. In a terrific chapter on John T. Flynn, Raimondo explains that this 1930s muckraking journalist was a “conventional liberal, whose views were not out of place in that bastion of liberal orthodoxy, *The New Republic*.” And what was a liberal back then? “Flynn supported the Democratic Party platform of 1932, which called for an end to the extravagant spending of the Republicans, a balanced budget, and the abolition of the new government bureaus and commissions.” It also opposed fiat money, alcohol prohibition, high tariffs, and belligerence abroad.

“But Flynn was soon disillusioned,” writes Raimondo. “During the first hundred days of his administration, Roosevelt racked up a deficit larger than the one it took Hoover two years to produce.” Flynn was “particularly horrified” by FDR’s National Recovery Administration, which was largely modeled on Mussolini’s corporatism. He called it “probably the gravest attack upon the whole principle of democratic society in our political history.” The New Deal radicalized Flynn against the central state as his liberal colleagues swooned over FDR’s corporatism. Raimondo explains, “The entry of the United States into World War II completed the transformation of Flynn from a disenchanted liberal to a proto-libertarian advocate of laissez-faire and non-intervention.”

Other Old Right stalwarts came from the Left. Rose Wilder Lane was a communist sympathizer, but “quite unlike her opposite numbers in the Future Neocons of America contingent,” she turned against socialism and came “to challenge the central premise of statism.” H.L. Mencken was not a conservative but a radical. There is nothing right-wing about his shockingly irreverent

*Notes on Democracy*, which lambastes nationalism, small towns, creationism, religion, prohibition, World War I, and puritanical busybodies. As for Albert Jay Nock, today's conservatives might see his views on family, landownership, and police as "Cultural Marxism." And the anarchistic Frank Chodorov warned that anyone who called him a conservative would "get a punch in the nose."

On the other hand, the Old Right was thoroughly anti-egalitarian, traditionalist, anti-internationalist, and anti-modernist. Raimondo's hero Garet Garrett, for example, upheld Americanism and nationalist freedom. The great Colonel McCormick was no leftist, nor were Robert Taft or Howard Buffett, leaders of the GOP's anti-Eisenhower wing.

As the Old Right lost the day, however, opponents of war and statism looked elsewhere. The intellectual leader of modern libertarianism, Murray N. Rothbard, split from the Right during the Cold War, sought alliances with the New Left, and worked to, in Raimondo's words, "reorient libertarian thought away from the pessimism of the [Old Right] Remnant by harking back to the optimism of nineteenth-century liberalism."

Rothbard's outlook transcended Left and Right. On foreign policy, he argued that all modern war, by expanding the state and killing the innocent, failed the libertarian test. This went much further than the America First position, which relied on nationalism to curb warmongering.

By the 1990s, when Raimondo wrote *Reclaiming the American Right*, the Cold War was over and he and Rothbard sensed new opportunities rightward: "Some conservatives looked for new enemies to conquer. But others were reminded of the original concept of the Right's anticommunist crusade as a temporary expedient, an extended but necessary diversion from the main task of building a free society." Seeing libertarians abandon principle—some backed Operation Desert Storm—and Buchananites echoing America First, Rothbard, Raimondo, and others spied the possibility of a new Old Right

alliance of libertarians and conservatives against the welfare/warfare state.

That decade gave reassurance to such hopes. When Bill Clinton pursued an illegal war on Serbia and sought unconstitutional police powers, Republicans objected. In 2000, George W. Bush called for a more "humble foreign policy." Then 9/11 happened. Almost all right-wingers reverted to Cold War-style support for the total state in the name of national security. But a conservative remnant has survived with its sanity. Raimondo maintains his affinity with that minority, while encouraging coalitions with the Left against the unlimited war on terror. In this magazine in 2004, he endorsed Ralph Nader as the Old Right choice.

For some libertarians, however, a fusion with conservatism has become impossible. Today, one of the modern Right's fiercest critics is Lew Rockwell, Rothbard's student and colleague, a proponent of paleo alliances in the 1990s, a friend of bourgeois values and the Old Right. Last month, Rockwell spoke at Ron Paul's Rally for the Republic in Minneapolis. "I for one no longer believe that Bush has betrayed conservatives," he said. "In fact, he has fulfilled conservatism, by completing the redefinition ... that began many decades ago with Bill Buckley. ... What does conservatism today stand for? It stands for war. It stands for power. It stands for spying, jailing without trial, torture, counterfeiting without limit, and lying from morning to night."

By contrast, Scott Richert's essay at the end of this edition draws a distinction between conservatism's defense of liberty and the "(abstract) libertarian ideal of nonaggression." For Richert, the trouble with neoconservatism "is not that the wrong ideology won, but that ideology won at all." True conservatism is grounded in Russell Kirk's "permanent things," not abstractions: "Rather than attempting to 'reconcile liberty and tradition,' we need to recover the traditional roots of liberty and recognize that liberty without tradition cannot long survive." This difference in emphasis will always separate libertarians from paleoconserv-

atives, even as we all celebrate the generation that opposed FDR and Truman.

But which movement today best embodies the Old Right spirit? Ron Paul's coalition is, like the Old Right, loose, populist, independent, traditionalist, and radical—the "realignment" in politics that was Colonel McCormick's dream. In the end, however, Paul's campaign was more libertarian than conservative, appealing more to Democratic and independent voters than to Republicans.

Modern conservatives would have despised the Old Right. Indeed, in November 2004, Sean Hannity denounced McCormick for publishing classified information in the *Chicago Tribune*. In January 2005, Rush Limbaugh loudly accused left-liberals of abandoning the resolute interventionism of FDR and Truman. Regnery Publishing, which used to bring out criticisms of World War II, today prints books defending Japanese internment.

Conservatism today is not too ideological or insufficiently traditional. Rather, it is ideologically devoted to the wrong traditions. It sees the U.S. empire, the police state, the Republican Party, and other right-wing symbols as proxies for freedom, as institutions worth more than liberty. It has adopted coercive nationalism and utilitarian collectivism and cast away the traditions of constitutionalism, freedom, and natural law on which bourgeois values depend.

At the same time, libertarians often neglect their own radical history. Far too many have backed Bush's war. Both libertarians and paleocons would profit from reading Raimondo. We are not the same movement, but we have common cause and overlapping heritage. Revisiting these traditions will help remind non-Hannitized conservatives of the ideals they are supposed to uphold and provide libertarians with the crucial history behind their own beliefs and tradition. ■

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[*The Wrecking Crew: How Conservatives Rule*, Thomas Frank, Metropolitan, 384 pages]

## What's the Matter With Thomas Frank?

By Tom Piatak

THOMAS FRANK'S LATEST philippic is lively and well-written and scores a number of direct hits on the frauds who moved to Washington in the name of shrinking government and restoring traditional morality but never found their way home. The book is correct in one of its main assertions: American conservatism made a grievous mistake in replacing the anti-Communism that used to hold the movement together with a servile interest in doing the bidding of transnational corporations. Yet Frank's claim that he is providing a comprehensive account of "How Conservatives Rule" is false. This book should instead be called "How Liberals Misremember," marred as it is by a failure to come to grips with the flaws of American liberalism, by a relentless partisanship, by presenting as central to the history of American conservatism episodes that are at best marginal. Frank is unable to understand that the greatest threat to the economic security he wishes to restore is the free trade that has its ideological roots in the liberalism of Woodrow Wilson and FDR and that flourished under Bill Clinton, who helped push through Congress NAFTA, the WTO, and most favored nation status for Communist China.

I found Frank's book both engaging and infuriating because we are contemporaries—he is one year younger than I am. We are both nostalgic for the blue-collar suburbs of our youth, and we were both interested in politics from an early age. Precisely because of these similarities, however, I was unimpressed by much of what Frank writes.

When he mocks student anti-Communist demonstrations during the 1980s on the grounds that "Every American detested the Soviet Union in those days," I beg to differ. Ronald Reagan's principled anti-Communism found little favor in the faculty lounges and the establishment press. They cheered when Jimmy Carter began his disastrous presidency by denouncing our "inordinate fear of Communism." They later pushed for a nuclear freeze that would have favored the Soviet Union. They also opposed Reagan's efforts to combat Communism in Central America. The American Left of the 1980s hated Ronald Reagan much more than it ever hated Leonid Brezhnev or Yuri Andropov, if it ever hated them at all, and it viewed Mikhail Gorbachev as the giant of the age. I remember watching liberals on "Nightline" and comparable shows offering excuses for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Soviet downing of KAL 007 and howling over our invasion of Grenada and aid to the Contras. If all these people "detested the Soviet Union," they could have fooled me.

Indeed, Frank's own disdain for Communism is far harder to detect than his disdain for American anti-Communists. His book is preceded by a quote from Lincoln Steffens's autobiography, and Steffens is quoted again in the text. No mention is made of the fact that Steffens helped lay the groundwork for generations of useful idiots and fellow travelers by exclaiming, "I have seen the future and it works" after visiting the Soviet Union. Frank vehemently denounces "red-baiters" throughout his book. He voices his contempt for "the Right's long-burning love affair with anti-Communism" and dismisses as fantastical the notion of "(liberal) treason in high places," without, of course, bothering to mention Alger Hiss, Harry Dexter White, Yalta, or any of the other inconvenient facts that led many Americans to conclude that the American Left was, at best, naïve about Communism.

Nor does Frank display any greater understanding of the reasons the New Deal coalition fell apart. In fact, he has

nothing bad to say about the federal government as it operates under liberals. He is nostalgic for the halcyon days of FDR "when the federal government looked like the savior of the nation and maybe even the planet," and he lauds the Great Society of LBJ, "the last liberal president."

Frank says far less about the 1970s in which we both grew up, which saw the rise of something for which Keynesian economics had no answer: simultaneous stagnant economic growth and high inflation. My father, a mechanical engineer for General Motors, was particularly concerned about being pushed into higher tax brackets by inflation. This problem was solved when Ronald Reagan not only cut taxes but indexed tax rates to inflation, an idea that was vehemently opposed by liberals who found inflation an easy way to finance more government.

And far from being supportive of the middle class, many of the government programs and initiatives supported by the Left were inimical to them. I don't know what in Frank's Kansas upbringing caused him to have such a benign view of the federal government, but there was nothing in my own early experiences that fostered such an outlook. My hometown of Parma, Ohio was in the crosshairs of the federal government because it did not want the federally funded low-income housing that destroys neighborhoods and blights cities. The high school that provided a quality education to my father and his brother, West Technical High School in Cleveland, no longer exists, destroyed by the forced busing that transformed a once great institution into a den of drug dealers. In fact, busing, one of the great liberal ideas of the '70s, greatly damaged Cleveland, forcing out members of the white middle class who were unable to get their children into private or parochial schools. I also recall how the type of liberals Frank lionizes viewed the people who opposed busing with contempt, branding them "racists" for resisting the insane social engineering to which they would never expose their own children—Bill and Hillary Clinton made sure Chelsea attended Sidwell

Friends rather than the D.C. public schools. This destructive type of governance continues today, with Section 8 housing merely moving the blight of inner-city Cleveland to the city's suburbs. These are not examples of "how conservatives govern" but of how liberals caused millions of Americans to take a dim view of government.

In 1973, another branch of the federal government decided that no state could do anything to protect unborn human life. This prompted applause from the McGovern wing of the Democratic Party, which, a year earlier, had excluded from its convention politicians who represented the interests of the working and middle classes, replacing them with cadres of leftists. Frank argues that working- and middle-class Americans should not vote for Republicans on the basis of such issues as abortion, but if he really views populist economics as a matter of prime importance, he would argue instead that Democrats should expunge the social liberalism that has alienated the party from many of its former supporters.

Frank not only misunderstands the reasons for liberalism's failure, he misrepresents conservatism. He is fixated on South Africa. He labels the efforts of some libertarians to congregate their numbers in New Hampshire a "voortrek." Many pages are devoted to detailing how conservatives opposed sanctions on apartheid South Africa. Frank describes how the International Freedom Foundation, a think-tank funded by the South African government, went from defending the apartheid government to promoting doctrinaire libertarianism. Frank's digressions on these topics are illuminating only if one believes that South Africa was the guiding light of American conservatism. Frank also devotes an entire chapter to the sorry story of worker exploitation in the Northern Marianas, Pacific islands that most American conservatives have never heard of.

Most readers would share Frank's belief that the economic security that many Americans used to enjoy was a good thing, but his prescription of more

regulation and more taxation will not return us to the strong economy of the '50s and '60s. Frank flatly declares that globalization is not the cause of growing economic inequality and insecurity, but the blunt truth is that as long as we adhere to free trade, attempts to increase regulation and taxation will cause more companies to send factories and even service jobs overseas, just as employers have learned to flee states with high taxes, extensive regulation, and strong unions for states that make it easier to do business.

Portions of this book are persuasive. Frank's vivid depiction of our Imperial Capital as a place where an amoral elite has grown rich in an environment of pervasive venality and corruption is accurate. He is on target when he writes

Rank-and-file conservatives *have* been betrayed, and repeatedly, on those matters commonly referred to as the culture wars . . . Unless you are solely interested in the welfare of business, Washington conservatives will all turn out to be 'impostors' to you, always ready to compromise on family values or their adherence to the Framers' 'original intent.'

He is also right to ridicule the "libertarian utopia of every man for himself" and to mock the business jargon that frequently finds echoes in what passes for conservative thought these days. He mockingly cites such tomes as *Surfing the Edge of Chaos*, *Change is the Rule*, and *The Dance of Change*, which all sound like they could have been written by the bizarre Newt Gingrich, who was last heard burling about a laptop for every kindergartener. But Frank's critique of such absurdities was made first, and better, by traditionalist conservatives such as the premier chronicler of the follies of the Beltway Right, the late Sam Francis.

Frank is not interested in any rapprochement with traditionalists and would be horrified at the suggestion that his criticisms of the likes of Jack Abramoff were anticipated by traditionalists. He disdains the "British crank

Enoch Powell." He sneers at "home-schooled kids" and those "opposing *Roe v. Wade*," and frequently attacks Howard Phillips and Pat Buchanan, neither of whom have used their time in the conservative movement to shill for big business. He closes his book by offering a contrast between "thought and antithought; health and illness; reason and conspiracy theory; liberalism and conservatism."

Frank thinks the legacy of American conservatism is wholly evil. Any conservative of any stripe who thinks there is a common cause with the likes of Thomas Frank is wrong. ■

*Tom Piatak writes from Cleveland, Ohio.*

*[The Big Squeeze: Tough Times for the American Worker, Steven Greenhouse, Knopf, 384 pages]*

## Blue-Collar Blues

By Patrick J. Deneen

JUXTAPOSED IN THE BUSINESS sections of many bookstores are two titles that attest to the existence of two Americas, one enjoying affluence and mobility in our globalized era while the other sees its wealth decline and job security disappear as a consequence of those same global forces. The first book, written by *Wall Street Journal* reporter Robert Frank, is entitled *Richistan* and describes the lifestyles of the nation's growing, if still small, number of millionaires. The second is *The Big Squeeze*, by *New York Times* reporter Steven Greenhouse, which describes the losers in the global sweepstakes: factory workers, service-economy workers, and increasingly even white-collar workers whose jobs are outsourced. Frank portrays a cosmopolitan class of global entrepreneurs whose success comes from disassociating from places and nations; Greenhouse focuses on the people left behind.



The point of comparison for Greenhouse is the 1950s. That remarkable period of U.S. history saw extraordinary economic growth as, in the aftermath of the World War II, the U.S. emerged as the only significant industrial power. We assumed the role of producer for the world. Because of the need for steady labor and the absence of significant international competition, major corporations created working conditions for middle- and lower-class workers that the world had never seen before: high wages, cradle-to-grave benefits, job security, a willingness to allow the formation of unions and provide support to local communities. The “working grunt” could expect a level of unprecedented prosperity, from home ownership to foreign travel. For Greenhouse, this period was marked by the existence of a “social contract.” Workers agreed to work long and hard, and in return they were guaranteed lifetime job security, benefits, and the prospect of a comfortable retirement.

That contract was fleeting: this idyllic period lasted perhaps 25 to 30 years, until the oil crisis of the 1970s, a point at which the U.S. reached the limits of its power—militarily, economically, and politically. While Ronald Reagan declared “morning in America,” the terms of the social contract were being rewritten, almost always to the detriment of employment security and economic stability, if also to the benefit of dynamic growth in the broader American and world economies. There’s the rub: the growth of overseas competition and the beginning of globalization spelled the demise of the social contract. American workers faced a cutthroat competitive environment in which labor was always expendable. Wages began to stagnate, benefits shrunk, and workers were forced to take more risks with their futures.

Early on in this process, observers saw that Reagan’s promise that “a rising tide lifts all boats” seemed evanescent: some clearly were riding out the stormy seas in their yachts, but the dinghies of many others were taking on water. By the 1990s, historian and social critic Christopher Lasch was writing about

“the revolt of the elites.” He described a divided culture in which elite beneficiaries of globalization no longer identified with their communities or even with the United States, seeing their destiny instead in the bounty of the global economy. Meanwhile, ordinary workers who failed in the meritocratic sweepstakes found that their life prospects had diminished: job security had all but disappeared due to outsourcing or widespread—and subtly sanctioned—illegal immigration; illness had become one’s own problem; retirement was probably not in the cards.

Among the many personal stories that Greenhouse relates are those of Chuck Moehling and Myra Bronstein. Chuck Moehling operated a sausage-stuffing machine for Tyson Foods from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., allowing him ample time to pursue his true calling: coaching Little League and basketball for his children. When Tyson froze salaries and reduced benefits in order to increase competitiveness and please stockholders, Moehling had to take a second job—in part to cover health-insurance premium costs that rose tenfold under his new contract. This ate into the time he could spend as a coach in the community. He notes bitterly, “You hear the reason kids end up the way they do today is because parents don’t spend enough time with them.” Longer hours for less pay and fewer benefits directly and adversely affect family values.

The example of Myra Bronstein, a software tester, shows that even high-tech white-collar workers are not safe. In spite of regularly working 12-hour shifts, she and her coworkers were summarily fired and told they must train their replacements to be eligible for severance. The replacements were flown in from India the following week.

Greenhouse paints a wrenching portrait of decent people who, by no fault of their own, have been fired, demoted, downsized, displaced, abandoned. He provides evidence for the widespread sense that something fundamental is broken in the economy, even if measures such as GDP and productivity con-

tinue to rise. He shows that while the workplace has been turned into a cornucopia of opportunity—if still a great deal of anxiety—for America’s elites, it has become an unforgiving place for the working classes.

Greenhouse’s picture should unnerve anyone committed to a stable future for American democracy. Yet his prescription for redressing the plight of the nation’s workers is unsatisfactory. He puts forward wan proposals to “change the conversation” or “jawbone” the issue and urges a strengthening of the unions. But the difficulty for Greenhouse lies in deciding to what extent he can accept the current economic model. Throughout the *Big Squeeze*, he accepts the logic of globalization as “inevitable” and “unstoppable,” even as he cites workers who decry outsourcing as “unpatriotic” and a CEO of Intel who admits that the ongoing loss of good American jobs “will portend a dimmer future for young Americans.” He eschews “crude measures” to curb the effects of globalization. He repeats the standard politicians’ theme that increasing funding for retraining in high-tech jobs will help solve the nation’s employment problems. He encourages scientific education to foster homegrown talent. But surely Greenhouse must know that only a miniscule number of the workers who have lost jobs over the past several decades can hope to reinvent themselves as MIT-trained scientists? Inevitably, many if not most manual laborers—who actually have the skills and inclination to do such work—are not predisposed to become successful free agents in the globalized system.

The retraining and education programs advocated by Greenhouse and others serve to assuage the guilty consciences of liberal elites who lament the “inevitability” of globalization as they happily play in its privileged fields. In commending such programs, Greenhouse reveals his bias as a “symbolic analyst.” While he highlights the ill effects of globalization, he also endorses the status quo by arguing that public policy ought to favor workers who are

capable of joining “Richistan” rather than those who are unwilling or unable to become part of the global marketplace. (As a sop, he also proposes better poverty programs, presumably for those who don’t make the globalization cut.) But why should we not support decent jobs and wages for people who work with their hands and do not want to abandon their communities?

Greenhouse concludes that globalization has been a net boon for Americans, but the evidence mustered in his book suggests otherwise. True, the globalized economy has benefited the denizens of “Richistan” and has made available to the consumer cheaper products manufactured in low-wage markets. But Greenhouse and others like him who promote economic efficiency above all do not ask whether the value of cheap products from China—not to mention our scandalously high levels of national and household debt—is worth the price of stable jobs in stable communities. He doesn’t question whether a certain kind of economics has trumped the very reason for economics: to make it possible for human beings to thrive in communities where they can put down roots and raise families, where their contributions can be appreciated, and where their children can expect a decent future.

We have made a certain economic logic—efficiency, GDP growth, and upward mobility—an end in itself while abandoning our commitment to the other treasures of life that are supported by a humane financial system. An economy should exist to make human flourishing possible, to provide the foundations for the goods that go beyond mere economics: family, community, worship. If our current system is undermining these possibilities for a vast swath of our countrymen, haven’t we ceased to understand the basic purpose of an economy? If we should begin “jawboning” about anything, this question would be a good place to start. ■

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## Power Play

*Continued from page 27*

only what is mediocre, “an average solution even in the best case.” For another, the law lacks “energy,” and “the best source of energy” is “one man.” What America needs today, Mansfield declares, is “a wise man on the spot” with freedom to act for the whole. To “subordinate” the president to law and the legislature is a “danger... he could not do his job.” Not only is a strong executive needed to deal with emergencies, Mansfield contends. It must also be able to overpower domestic opposition—to oppose a majority faction produced by temporary delusions in the people.” If it is suggested that there is a connection between a strong executive and imperialism, Mansfield regards it as better to err on the side of imperialism than isolationism. The difficulties of the war in Iraq arose, he writes, “from having wished to leave too much to the Iraqis, thus from a sense of inhibition rather than imperial ambition.” (It seems apposite that Mansfield should be a champion of “manliness,” the topic of his recent book.)

Another proponent of the “unitary” presidency is Michael Goldfarb, previously at the *Weekly Standard* and now the deputy communications director for the McCain campaign. Goldfarb asserts that the framers “sought an energetic executive with near dictatorial power in pursuing foreign policy and war.”

Voices calling for unleashing virtuous American power have long been heard in the electronic media, the major newspapers—*Washington Post* and *New York Times* prominent among them—the big news magazines, and the leading opinion periodicals. Long before 9/11, Charles Krauthammer wrote that America must take advantage of being the only superpower to create a world to its liking. How should it accomplish this goal? “By unapologetic and implacable demonstrations of will.” Why should virtuous America not be “implacable”? Robert Kagan added that “America ...

can sometimes seem like a bully on the world stage. ... But really, the 1,200 pound gorilla is an underachiever in the bullying business.”

The handwriting is all over the wall. It is becoming clearer with each passing day that neo-Jacobinism and related currents, which may have seemed innocuous and academic to some, have provided ideological cover for a grasping and ruthless pursuit of power. People of great ambition who want to exercise the power being abdicated by Americans are trying to make us accept and even welcome the final disappearance of constitutionalism and its culture of modesty and self-restraint.

Wishing not to appear too radical, the perpetrators of the coup from within speak in the name of America, and their rhetoric is sometimes faintly conservative. They often present themselves as “neoconservatives” or even “conservatives.” But they are not inspired by a desire to protect and reconstitute the best of the Western tradition. By changing the meaning of words, they are rather trying to reconcile us to the demise of that heritage and its replacement with their own enlightened regime. Their response to the crisis, which they have aggravated, will hasten the crumbling of the American constitutional order. Their prescriptions contain the outlines of tyranny.

What is ominous about these, our saviors, is not that they want power. It is that they represent a conceited interest and have an obsessive desire to rule—a desire that cannot be concealed by feigned benevolence toward Americans and all mankind. It is necessary to expose their false solutions to what are real problems and to explore by what measures the best of our civilization might, despite daunting odds, be given a new lease on life. ■

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# Dangerous Addiction

I live in Mexico about an hour south of Guadalajara, on the north shore of Lake Chapala. Permit me a few thoughts on Latin politics, the Mexican economy and,

above all, drugs as seen from south of the border. These could shortly prove important for the United States.

Some things go well here. The Mexican birthrate has fallen sharply. President Calderon is a responsible politician, a great improvement over the dictators who once ruled the country. The far Left, as personified by Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador—"AMLO"—seems quiescent. Women are rapidly being integrated into the universities and professions. The country is not static and, if left to itself, would move in wholesome directions.

But it is not being left to itself. Here as elsewhere, jobs go to China. Here as elsewhere, cheap Chinese goods flood the stores. In Guadalajara, the huge market called San Juan de Dios is now referred to as Taiwan de Dios—though of course it is the mainland that provides the goods that crowd out local manufacture. Mexicans complain that NAFTA, by requiring Mexican agriculture to compete with far more efficient American agribusiness, has forced farmers to abandon the countryside and move to cities—not good. Mexico's oil production, which provides a high proportion of the national income, is declining. These problems place, or will soon place, grave strains on the national fabric.

Which brings us to drugs. On top of other problems, drug traffic is tearing the country apart. Policemen and journalists are murdered, gunfights between traffickers occur often in cities. The

enormous profits of selling to the North American market are destabilizing to a country new to democracy. Although it doesn't rhyme in Spanish, people here say that Mexicans are dying because Americans are buying.

Everywhere I have been in Latin America, which is to say most of it, I hear the same thing: the United States is wreaking havoc in other countries by forcing upon them antidrug policies for the benefit of the U.S., expecting them to solve a problem America chooses not to solve itself. America's drug problem, say Latin Americans, is that Americans want drugs. If they don't want drugs, why don't they stop buying them? Why does Bolivia have to enforce American laws that the U.S. won't?

You don't have to agree with their point of view, but it has a degree of plausibility. In the United States, the drug business is solidly established, runs smoothly, and causes little social disruption. Drugs are readily available everywhere, in small towns and cities, in high schools and below. People from all social classes use: the rich buy cocaine, blue-collar whites use amphetamines and crack, and white-collar professionals smoke marijuana. In comparison with other countries, little damage is done. Police and reporters are not killed. Few people get caught using, and the penalties for first-time use are low. The War on Drugs serves only to keep prices high enough to make the traffickers rich but low enough that anyone who wants drugs can afford them.

Mexicans (and Bolivians and Colombians and ...) ask, "Why should we tear our countries apart when the U.S. refuses to control its own traffickers?" I reply lamely, "Well, see, the big traffickers have lawyers and constitutional protections and work through cutouts and so on. Too many of the users are respectable white citizens and it is politically impossible to impose heavy penalties. You can't put high-schoolers in jail for five years or a single mother who works as a beautician and has three children to support. It's easier to try to force other countries not to produce drugs than to police our own country."

The South American response—I mean of the public, not the governments, which want U.S. antidrug money—is: "If your laws don't work, change them. But leave us alone."

It is curious but true that antidrug efforts often work against our political ends. Latin America furiously resents what it sees as American meddling in its affairs. While I don't know how I might quantify it, I know that this resentment helped elect the wave of leftist governments popping up in South America. In Afghanistan, if we destroy the poppy fields that produce most of the world's heroin, the farmers pick up rifles and join the Taliban.

The question becomes: Do the results of the antidrug efforts justify the ill-will and potential destabilization of governments that we don't want destabilized? If the War on Drugs in fact got rid of drugs or made them hard to obtain, the answer might be yes. But drugs are everywhere obtainable. What then do we gain by straining relations abroad? If Mexico goes leftist or falls apart, we may wish we had done something else. ■



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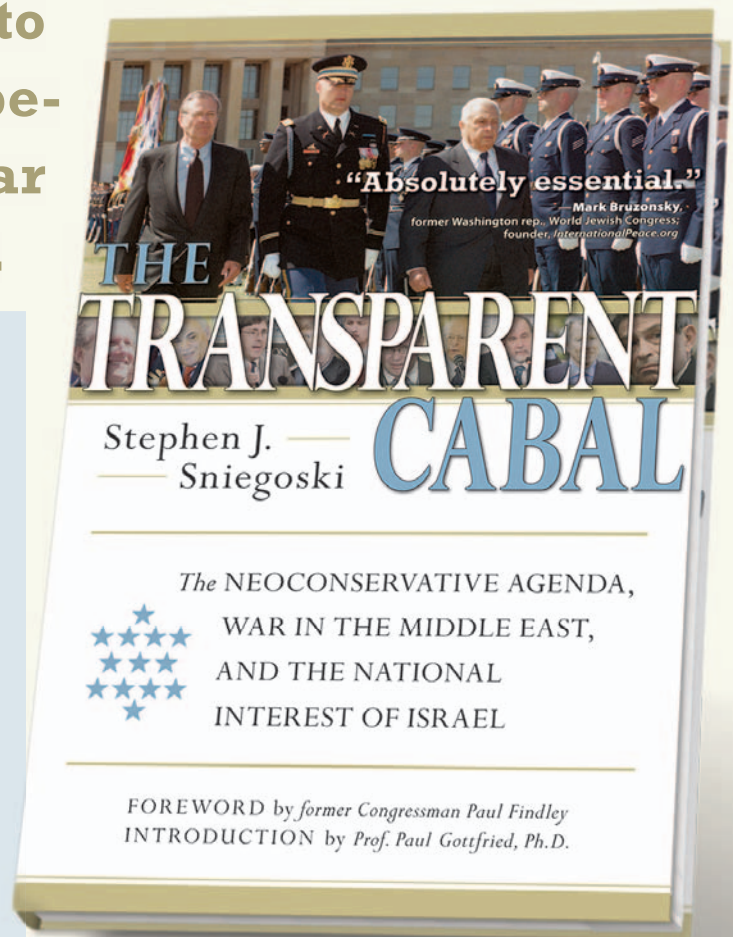
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